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The Diary of
A COMMUNIST SCHOOLBOY

N. OGNIOV

*The Diary of
A Communist Schoolboy*

Translated from the Russian
by

ALEXANDER WERTH

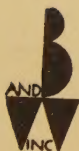
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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

A few words in this book will sound strange to English readers.

Pu-council stands for the "Council of Pupils"; *skworker* stands for "school worker," i.e. teacher, and is the nearest equivalent of the Russian *shkrab*, a contraction of *shkolnyi rabotnik*.

On the same principle, the boys also abbreviate the ponderous names of their teachers; *Elena Nikitichna Kaurova* is called *Elnikitka* for short; *Alexey Maksimitch Fisher*, *Almakfish*; *Nikolay Petrovitch Ozhegov*, *Nikpetozh*; *Zinaida Pavlovna*, *Zin-Palna*.

I have also preserved such characteristic phrases as "*liquidate your ignorance*" and "he feels no *stabilisation* under his feet."

The contraction of words and the wide use of a semi-technical jargon illustrate the new Russian tendency towards "Americanised" efficiency in the one case and the powerful influence on the spoken language of technical and industrial propaganda in the other.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Miss Freda Lendrum for her generous assistance in the preparation of this translation, and to M.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Mikhail Osorgin for helping me to secure the almost unavailable biographical material concerning the author of the *Diary*, which is printed on the wrapper.

A. W.

192 AV. DAUMESNIL, PARIS (12^e),
February 12th, 1928.

SCHOOL YEAR 1923-4
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FIRST COPY-BOOK

September 15th, 1923

It's the middle of September already, but school hasn't begun yet. No one knows when we'll start. They said the school was being repaired, but when I went there this morning I saw no signs of it, and there was no one to ask. The doors were wide open, but no one was inside. On my way home I bought this copy-book from a youngster for three "lemons."¹ When I came home I didn't know what to do with myself, so I finally decided to start a diary. I shall write all kinds of things in it.

I want to change my name to "Vladlen."² Far too many people are called Constantine. Besides, there was a Turkish king named Constantine who conquered Constantinople, and, as Serezhka Blinov would say, I could spit down on this king from the sixteenth floor. But I went down to the militia yesterday, and they told me I couldn't change my name until I was eighteen. It's a pity to have to wait for two and a half years.

¹ Millions of roubles.

² Vladimir Lenin.

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September 16th

I thought it would be difficult to know what to write in this diary, but I find there's plenty. Serezhka Blinov called for me this morning and told me school would begin on the 20th ; but the most important thing was our talk about Lina G. He advised me not to be pally with her, as her father was a servant of the Cult,¹ and said it would be a disgrace if I, a son of the proletariat, were to attract general attention. I told him that, in the first place, I never attracted any general attention, and that Lina belonged to my group, and sat at the same desk as myself, and that it was only natural for me to be friends with her. But Serezhka said that the proletarian consciousness could not permit this, and that, in the opinion of the skworkers² and the pu-council,³ I had already had a bad effect on her. That, instead of studying, she hung about the streets with me, and was quite likely to rot away in the ideological sense. And Serezhka also said that this palli-ness with girls ought to be stopped if one wanted to enter the A.C.Y.⁴ Serezhka and I cursed each other, and I went home ; and now I am writing what I hadn't time to tell

¹i.e. a priest.

²"School-Workers," i.e. teachers.

³Council of the pupils. ⁴Alliance of Communist Youth.

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him : Lina doesn't exist for me as a woman, but only as a comrade ; on the whole, I look down on our girls with a certain amount of contempt. They are all interested in clothes and shoes and dancing, and most of all in gossip. If people were put in jail for gossip, not a single girl would remain in our group. As for having gone last year to the cinema with Lina, it's simply because I hadn't anyone else to go with. And Lina likes the cinema as much as I do. There is nothing surprising in that. I am looking forward to the opening of school. It's just like home to me, only it's more interesting.

September 20th

School has opened at last. It was fearfully noisy and rowdy. The same old fellows are in our group, but there are two new girls. One is fair, and has a pigtail with a bow like a propeller. She's called Sylphida, though she's pure Russian. The fellows at once called her Sylva. Her second name is Dubinin.

The other is dark and bobbed and dressed in black, and somehow she seems black altogether, and she never laughs. You say something to her, and off she goes like a railway engine—" Foo, ffoo, f-f-foo, f-f-f-foo."

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And she doesn't walk straight, and wanders about like a shadow. Her name is Zoya Travnikova.

September 27th

The Dalton Plan is being introduced at our school. It's a system under which the skworkers do nothing and the pupils have to find everything out for themselves. At least, that's what it looks like to me. There will be no more classes, and the pupils will merely be given "tasks." These will be handed out a month in advance, and may be prepared either at home or in school, and when your "task" is finished you get examined at the lab. There will be labs instead of classrooms, and in each there will be a *spesh*¹ in that particular subject. Almakfish, for instance, will be hanging round the maths lab; Nikpetozh will be in the sociology lab; and so on. They'll be the spiders and we'll be the flies.

We have decided to shorten the names of all the skworkers. Alexey Maximitch Fisher will be Almakfish; Nikolay Petrovitch Ozhegov will be Nikpetozh.

I don't talk to Lina nowadays, and she wants to move to another desk.

¹Specialist.

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October 1st

The Dalton Plan has begun. All the desks have been crammed into one room, which will be the lecture-hall. Instead of desks we'll have long benches and tables. Vanka Petukhov and I loafed all day about these labs, and I felt silly. Even the skworkers don't seem very clear how to go about this Dalton business. As usual, Nikpetozh turned out to be the most sensible among them. He simply walked in and gave the usual class, except that we had benches instead of desks. Sylphida Dubinin sat next to me, but Lina sat at the opposite end. Well, she can go to the devil.

To-day Zoya Travnikova gave us all a laugh. She started preaching to the girls about dead people, and how they rise at night and appear to the living. Some of the boys went up and listened, and then Vanka Petukhov asked : " Have you seen any dead people yourself ? " " Of course I have." " And what do they look like ? " " They are sort of blue and pale, and look as if they hadn't eaten for a long time ; and they howl." And at this point Zoya made a terrible face, and moved her arms back and forth in the weirdest fashion. Then Vanka said : " That's all lies ; I think dead people are spotted grey and brown and pink, and they grunt hwee !

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hwee ! hwee ! ” And he squealed like a pigling. Zoya got cross and puffed away as usual, and all the boys laughed.

October 3rd

The Dalton thing is a wash-out. No one can understand a thing, not even the skworkers. The skworkers discuss it every evening amongst themselves. The only novelty so far is that we have to sit on benches and have no place to put our books. Nikpetozh says there's no need for it, as there'll be special bookcases in the labs, with books on every subject, so that everybody can get whatever he needs. But what is to happen until we get the bookcases ?

The boys say that this plan was invented by some Lord Dalton, of bourgeois stock. Now I wonder what the devil we need this bourgeois plan for ? And they also say that while that lord was busy inventing he was being fed on goose's liver and jelly. I'd just like to see him do it on nothing but an eighth of bread, or going through the villages begging as we did in our colony. Anyone could do it on goose's liver.

Sylphida is always fidgeting, and it's uncomfortable sitting on the same bench. Several times I told her to go to hell, and she

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turned round and called me a skunk. I inquired about her social origin, and found that her father was a compositor. It's a nuisance, for, if she were a bourgeois, I would just *show her*.

October 4th

To-day there was a general meeting about self-government. They discussed last year's defects and the best ways to get rid of them. The greatest mistake is the penalty book. All the pu-councillors, even the best of them, threaten you with it on every occasion. And it doesn't do much good, anyway. In the end it was decided to suppress the book for a month, and to see how that would work. Everybody was very pleased, and shouted hurrah. Zoya Travnikova, as usual, made a nuisance of herself. She got up and said in a funereal tone : " For my own part, I think that the boys, especially, ought to be locked up in a dark cell. Otherwise there's no way of managing them." How they all booed and whistled ! At first there was a general shout of indignation, and then she apologised and said she had meant it as a joke. Some joke, I must say ! She's all black from head to foot, and now they call her Black Zoya.

After the general meeting there was a

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meeting of the new pu-council. It's been elected for a month.

October 5th

Our group was in a rage to-day. This is how it happened. Our new nat-history sk-worker, Elena Nikitichna Kaurova, known as Elnikitka, arrived. She began handing out tasks, and then said to the whole group : " Children——"

I then got up and said : " We're not children."

She answered : " Of course you are children, and I shan't call you anything else."

Then I answered : " Be good enough to be more polite, or else we may send you to the devil."

That was all. The whole group supported me, and Elnikitka grew quite red and said : " In that case, leave the classroom."

" In the first place," I answered, " This isn't a classroom, but a lab, and, in any case, you can't chase anyone out."

Then she said : " You're a rude fellow," and I replied : " You're more like a teacher of the old school, and only they were allowed to behave the way you do."

That was all. Elnikitka jumped out of the room as if she'd been burnt. There'll be some

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fuss now ! The pu-council will chip in, and then the skworkers' meeting, and finally the school board. It seems perfect nonsense to me. Elnikitka is simply a damn fool.

In the old school the skworkers used to torment the boys any way they liked : but we shan't allow that now. I remember Nikpetozh reading us passages from *Stories of the Seminary*,¹ in which even grown-up fellows were flogged right in the classroom at the door ; and I have also read how boys were made to swot, and how they were given all kinds of nicknames. But in those days the boys had no idea of the times through which we have had to live. For we've known famine and cold and anarchy ; we've had to feed the whole family, and have travelled a thousand miles in search of bread, and some of us have been through the civil war. It isn't three years yet since the war ended. After the row with Elnikitka I thought about it all, and, to get my ideas straight, I tried to talk to Nikpetozh, but the lab was crowded and he was busy, so I went to the maths lab and told Almakfish what I thought of our life. He said that all we had lived through proved *quantitatively, the abundance of the epoch, and that, qualitatively, it stood beyond good and evil.*

I hadn't been thinking of that at all, and

¹ By Pomialovsky, written in the early 'sixties.

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had only meant to show him that no one had any right to treat us as children or dummies ; but we hadn't time to thrash it out, because some boys came in and began asking him questions about maths. But for some reason Almakfish again started about "good and evil." Now, it seems to me that there isn't any such thing as good or evil ; what is good for one may be evil for another, and *vice versa*. If a tradesman makes a hundred per cent. profit on his goods, it's good for him and evil for the purchaser. At any rate, that's what it says in the *Politgrammar*.

October 6th

Well, we've got to do some work ! In a month, or rather less—before November 1st—I'll have to read right through a whole pile of books, write ten reports, and sketch eight diagrams, and, in addition to all this, know how to answer questions in an oral ; in fact, not merely answer, but talk about the things I've learned. And, besides, there are practical tasks in physics, chemistry, and electricity, and I'll have to stick in the phys lab for a whole week. To-day Sylphida and I were called before the pu-council. Serezhka Blinov and the others were sitting there. It appears that she had reported to them that

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I swear at her like people in a queue. I had done nothing of the kind. When we went out I pulled her bow ; she howled and dashed off. No, to sit next to girls is intellectualism. To-morrow I'm going to change my seat.

October 7th

The skworkers' meeting decided to hand over the Elnikitka business to the school board, and proposed to have it discussed at the general meeting. This meeting takes place to-morrow. I don't know how it'll end, but we certainly shan't allow ourselves to be called children.

To-day the first number of a wall-sheet called the *Red Scholar* appeared. At first everybody was interested, but it all turned out to be bunk. The articles are stupid—all about studying and good behaviour. Serezhka Blinov and some others are on the editorial committee.

I received a note : " It is no use your trying to look interesting ; none of the girls want to have anything to do with you." I don't know what to " look interesting " means. I'm sure it's Lina. She has made friends with that new girl, Black Zoya, and they are constantly sitting together beside the stove and whispering to each other. They stay there

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even when everybody else is out playing games. I'm sure they're awfully anxious that someone should go up to them, but the boys never even look at them. Quite right, too ! Black Zoya has been named "Fascist," because the Fascists always wear black clothes. It makes her cross, although she doesn't see the point. The girls all know much less about politics than the boys.

October 8th

I'm just back from school. The general council, at which they discussed my business with Elnikitka, has just ended. Nikpetozh was the most intelligent talker. He said it was all nonsense, and that every school-teacher ought to know the correct way of approach, and that Elena Nikitichna had not yet developed it, but that she would in time. The skworkers described me as an ill-bred fellow, and thought I should be influenced by moral pressure. Big Zinaida (or Zin-Palna), our inspectress, said that I was a very thoughtful boy who simply didn't know how to control his instincts. Surely it's difficult to control them when she calls me a "boy" ; I can't stand it. But it's difficult to argue with her ; for she just calls you into the teachers' room

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and gives you hell. You feel queer after it for the rest of the day. But to go back to the general council : for no reason whatsoever the Fascist, Zoya Travnikova, suddenly got up and said there was no way of keeping me in order, that I molested the girls and what not. Here I got furious. I said, first, that I never spoke to her, and, secondly, that she couldn't produce any evidence. All our group booed her, for it's against all group ethics to denounce one's own comrade at the general meeting. In the end it was voted that I should apologise to Elnikitka, and I said she ought to apologise first for having called us " children." Now the matter will go before the school board. I suppose Elnikitka will plough me now in nat-history. That'll be all she can do.

I went home with Vanka Petukhov, and he said it was a bad thing to give way, and that I should be firm. Vanka sells cigarettes though he has no licence. The chief milton¹ used to chase him away from the street corners, but finally he got tired, and Vanka can trade now as much as he likes. He can't do without it, for he has an invalid aunt and sister, and he's the only worker in the house and has to attend school as well. I am glad my father is a tailor, and that I'm the only

¹ Slang for militiaman.

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one in the family, or else I should have to sell cigarettes too.

October 10th

In the lecture-room to-day Elnikitka explained our "task," and Sylva, who sat next to me, kept on fidgeting. I happened to touch her with my elbow, and she squealed. Elnikitka asked what was wrong, and Sylva, of course, complained. Elnikitka called me a hooligan, and I asked what a "hooligan" was and what the word implied, but she couldn't explain it properly. Later on I asked Nikpetozh what a "hooligan" was. It seems that a hooligan is a person who hurts other people without getting any benefit for himself. Now, how did I hurt Sylva? I didn't spit into her porridge, did I?

October 11th

A new wall-sheet, *EX*, appeared to-day—I don't know from where. In this *EX* everybody gets it in the neck—the skworkers, Dalton, the girls who dance on the quiet, and above all, the *Red Scholar*. Ever since the beginning of term the labs have been empty. In the sociology lab alone all the books on *politgrammar* have been taken out, and the

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aquarium and collections have been taken into the nat-history lab. Each lab ought to contain a full collection of books and manuals on its particular subject if it's to be of any use. The pupils could then get on with their work and really prepare their tasks.

October 12th

During the lunch interval we played bast shoe in the hall. Bast shoe is a winter game, something like football. We keep a shoe¹ underneath the staircase, and get it out when we want to play. Everybody stands round in a circle, and kicks the shoe as hard as he can to get it out of the corner. Somebody stands in the middle and catches it. If he catches it, the shoe is put back to where the last one kicked it from. We played along, and the shoe flew about like an aeroplane, when suddenly I kicked it so hard that it flew right out of the circle and hit Zinaida straight in the face ; she was coming into the hall at the time. Wasn't she wild ! She stamped her foot—it's a habit of hers—and shouted : “ Stop this ! Who did this ? ” No one said anything. And off she went in a stream of miserable words : “ I thought our

¹ *Lapot* is a soft shoe made of the bark of a tree. It is worn by the poorer peasants.

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school still believed in the rule that the guilty one must admit his fault ; for if he doesn't admit it he's a coward," etc., etc.

I couldn't keep myself from saying : " Of course the guilty one must confess. Only what is there to confess ? "

" It is wrong," Zinaida said, " to be so violent in your movements and to disregard the possibility of all sorts of bodily injuries."

Then I said it was me. Zinaida came close to me, seized my hand; and said : " Come along." Here I felt a kind of spell come over me, and I followed her to the teachers' room. How she lectured me ! It's what I hate most. So I said to her : " What's the good of self-government if the skworkers go on interfering everywhere, and make rows all day long ? Refer this to the pu-council, and they'll put this right." To which she replied : " First of all you must remember that you aren't a man, but only a little worm. You aren't responsible for your actions." And again she started giving me hell.

When I got away, the shoe game had already stopped and the lunch interval was over. If I had been as friendly with Serezhka Blinov as before, I would have talked to him about self-government and the skworkers. But now there's no one. What about Vanka Petukhov ? I've meant to join a Communist

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Unit for a long time, only ours is a very futile one ; it could easily tone down the sk-workers, but it won't interfere in anything concerning the school ; the meetings of the unit are open to everyone, but they are so dull that no one outside the party ever attends them. Nothing but politics and production ; too much like a dreary lesson. And if any of the fellows start lecturing, you just fall asleep.

October 13th

There has been a meeting of the school board about my business with Elnikitka, and at it Big Zinaida also brought up the bast shoe incident. It was resolved to exert moral pressure upon me. Nikpetozh took me aside to an empty lab and started talking, only he didn't say anything about my character, but merely discussed Dalton. He said that teachers didn't regard teaching the way they used to in the old days. They thought then that it was enough to stuff a boy's head with all kinds of things, and no sooner was the pupil out of school than all the learning evaporated. Briefly, they had to fill an empty vessel somehow, but they didn't care a god-dam what they filled it up with. Nowadays a pupil is supposed to be like a bonfire ; you only have to light it and it'll continue

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burning. That's why the Dalton Plan is being introduced, so that the pupils might work with their own brains.

I said this was very difficult, and that probably no one would finish the tasks by November 1st. Nikpetozh said that this didn't really matter, because in the end everybody would realise the usefulness of the Dalton method. Then I asked him whether he thought me a hooligan or not.

He said that, frankly, he didn't think so, but that I was certainly rather abrupt, although I would probably get over it in time. I felt quite cheerful after I left Nikpetozh and went off to apologise to Elnikitka. But, when I got to the nat-history lab, she suddenly jumped at me and started lecturing me, saying that I wouldn't work, and wouldn't let others work, and what not. I was furious, and put out my tongue at her and came away. It'll probably go before the school board again, and they'll send for father. Oh, well, the devil take them! In my opinion, Elnikitka tries to put out the bonfire instead of lighting it.

I've received another note : " Even though a certain g. is in love with you, don't imagine you are very interesting. And stop swearing, or else no one will talk to you."

I'm sure it's Lina again.

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October 15th

It was Sunday yesterday, and I went to the cinema with Sylva. The reason why I went with her is that she manages to get reduced tickets. They were showing a film called *The Island of Broken Ships*. I noticed Lina and Black Zoya in the *foyer* ; they are very friendly these days, and are constantly whispering to each other. After the pictures, Lina suddenly came up to me and said : “ Come here a minute.”

I went, and Sylva immediately went home. Then Lina said : “ Although you don’t talk to me, I want to tell you that perhaps soon you won’t see me any more. And you can tell your Sylva that I de-tes-s-st her.”

I turned my back on her and walked past Black Zoya, who was standing there like a statue. What are they pestering me for ?

October 20th

The *EX* continues to come out, and still no one knows who writes it. It must be the senior groups. And now there has appeared a “ hand-to-hand ” paper, with a strict warning about not showing it to the skworkers. It’s called *S.T.X.*, i.e. *Supplement to EX*. This *S.T.X.* is full of dirt, and it’s funny like the dickens.

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October 23rd

Somehow or other the *S.T.X.* has fallen into Nikpetozh's hands. He walked in and started talking all about love and the relation between men and women, as if we didn't know all about that already, but I was impressed all the same when he said that love was like a beautiful flower-garden, and that those who went in for obscenity committed a nuisance in that garden. And when Volodka Schmerz asked him whether it was *really* a flower-garden, Nikpetozh said yes, and a very wonderful one, all bright and shining with gold and silver. The fellows giggled and the girls hissed at them, and Black Zoya got up and said : " And, what is more, love can last until death."

Nikpetozh asked her : " How do you mean ' until death ? ' "

And she replied : " No, not only until death, but even beyond death. I knew a man who loved a dead girl."

And as she said this she made an awful face, as though she were dead herself. Even the fellows stopped chuckling. And Nikpetozh said that that was unnatural, and that dead bodies rotted and turned into earth so quickly that there could be no question of loving dead people.

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October 24th

A new wall-sheet has appeared, published by "The United Collectivity of the Junior Groups" and called *The Reel*. Everybody was interested in it at once because of the question it asks: "Can the boys and girls in our school be friends?" I copied the answers, which were stuck on the wall beside the paper.

"(1) If their characters agree, they can."

"(2) A girl cannot be friends with a boy, because they have entirely different interests and convictions." (The Fascist wrote this.)

"(3) I suppose it's possible, but not in every case. This is what happens at our school. No sooner do you make friends than you are teased on every side, and have to drop the whole thing. It's always taken up in the wrong light."

"(4) No. Girls are the spirit of contradiction." (I wrote this.)

"(5) It would be possible if some girls didn't treat boys so contemptuously, for this undermines the relation of other girls to the latter."

"(6) This question is difficult to answer. I, for instance, understand friendship in two ways. Firstly, there must be a collective, general friendship between boys and girls, which, I think, is possible. But there is also

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another kind of friendship—that between individuals. Such friendship can exist between a special boy and girl, but not between any boy and any girl, and *vice versa*. Generally speaking, friendship is a good thing, and should not be condemned.”

“(7) In my opinion it's impossible, because all friendship sooner or later is bound to develop into a stronger feeling on one side or the other.” (I know Lina wrote this.)

October 26th

A serious thing happened to-day. Zoya Travnikova was long ago christened “Black Zoya” and “Fascist,” but nobody except herself took any notice of it. To-day, in the lecture-hall, Nikpetozh told us in detail about Mussolini and the Fascists, and how the Black Shirts captured Rome and ill-used the Communists. During the lunch interval the boys arranged to form a circle round Zoya, and they sang :

We're not afraid of Fascists ;
We'll shoot them, we'll shoot them.

At first Zoya howled, then she started fighting, and we still laughed. But suddenly she fell bang on the floor. We at once stopped singing and examined her, and there she

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lay, looking quite dead ; all pale, and her teeth clenched together. Everybody got alarmed ; water was brought and poured over her. Still she wouldn't recover. Then Elnikitka came rushing in and scolded us, and told us to get a bottle of ammonia out of the first-aid box. Elnikitka let Zoya smell it, and finally Zoya came back to her senses. Then Elnikitka again pounced on us and drove us out.

After that Nikpetozh, the leader of our group, made us assemble in the lecture-room, and we had a talk about nicknames. He wanted to know first what nicknames were used. Some of the girls have several nicknames ; the boys have fewer. There's one girl with four names : Dog, Gut, Veteran, Cabbage. We had a long discussion, and finally decided to stop using any nickname if its owner objected to it. The girls immediately kicked up a row, and, one after another, demanded that their nicknames should be suppressed. It was all taken down in writing.

Now, I think that this is all intellectualism. They call me Goat, but I don't care in the least.

October 27th

A party of " young pioneers " has been

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formed. Solemn vows must be made, marching round the hall, no smoking and so on. All those fond of swank have joined. It's just like the red ties for the little ones. I think I'll wait till I'm received at the A.C.Y. By conviction I am a Communist.

Zoya and Lina didn't join the pioneers, because "the pioneers are against God." That's what they say to each other and to the other girls. They are both irresponsible fools ; for the world began with a cell, which can be proved, and not with God at all. When Elnikitka explains the November tasks I must ask her about God. As an expert in natural history she ought to be able to explain it in detail.

October 29th

A talk with Serezhka Blinov. He said to me : " Now, although I'm on the pupil-council, I still consider our self-government bad. What sort of a self-government is it, if we've still got to do what the skworkers tell us ? We have copied too much from the old school. For example, the compulsory morning greeting. Each pupil, on meeting a skworker in the morning, has to say good morning to him. This is wrong , for quite likely the pupil doesn't care a hang about the good or

bad morning. And then this habit of getting up when the skworker enters the class. Of course, this doesn't matter much now, because we have no classes, and even lectures are rare."

I agreed with him, and he asked me if I would support him in case he objected to the present form of self-government. I said I would, because it's quite true—there isn't any real self-government. If the pu-council decides anything, the decision must first go before the skworkers' council and then before the school board, and it's the school board who has the final say in everything. Besides, every skworker is allowed to jaw a pupil as much as he likes ; haven't I often gone through it myself?

October 30th

Black Zoya fainted again to-day. As usual, she was sitting beside the stove with Lina ; then they seemed to quarrel, and suddenly Zoya flopped down on the floor. Again they brought water and ammonia and rubbed her to life. Zinaida took Zoya into the teachers' room and talked to her for a long time. A strange girl, that Zoya. She seems to think too much about dead people ; that's why she faints.

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October 31st

We start handing in our tasks to-morrow. I sat up all last night, and will have to do it again to-night. The worst of it is that there are no books. The fellows have taken them all away from the labs and the lecture-room. Where can I get them ? I haven't any money to buy books. To-day I'll sketch a sociology diagram.

After all, they shouldn't have introduced Dalton at our school.

SECOND COPY-BOOK

November 1st

I failed, of course, in maths and physics ; as for nat-history, I didn't even attempt it. It appears that this will be called "indebtedness." Nothing will be right till I pass, and I can't get a mark till then. It feels awkward all the same, for half the people have passed. Of course, I delivered my work to Nikpetozh, and also handed in the diagrams.

We are beginning to prepare for the October festivities, and I have been elected to the committee. Sylphida D. was also elected from our group.

November 3rd

We have decided to decorate the whole building with flags and fir-branches. The sk-workers said they wouldn't interfere, and that we'd have to do it all ourselves. That's grand ; without the skworkers things go with a wallop. It seems Sylva isn't quite such a fool and intellectual as I thought she was. She dislikes dancing, and wears a propeller bow because her mother makes her do it.

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Yesterday I advised her not to pay any attention to her mother, but she said she loved her and therefore obeyed her. This is something I can't understand—how one can wear a bow against one's convictions. I wouldn't wear one for anything, even though I do love and respect my dad. To-morrow we're off to the country to get fir-branches. Hurrah !

November 5th

Nearly everything is ready. The illumination is arranged in the form of a red star right above the main entrance. All the labs, the hall, and the lecture-room are decorated with flags and branches. Everybody admires the arrangement ; I'm glad.

November 7th °

They have gone off to the demonstration, even dad, and I am alone at home. Yesterday I crawled up the roof above the main entrance to fix the " Long Live the Soviets " poster, when suddenly I fell and sprained my ankle. It was terribly sore, but it's better now, though I still can't get up. Sylva was standing on the pavement when it happened, and she took my shoe off and began rubbing my leg. At first I kicked, but then it was all right,

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even kind of pleasant. Then she called for Vanka Petukhov and the others, who found a stretcher somewhere and carried me home. Perhaps girls can, after all, be good comrades. I must remember that, and talk it over with Vanka Petukhov. Now that I have nothing to do I shall write about everybody.

Vanka Petukhov is a sly fox. On November 1st they all went to hand in their maths problems, but, as there was no fixed time for doing this, Vanka didn't go. He learned later that Almakfish had asked questions about theorems, so he went on the 3rd and passed. He did the same with all the other subjects. And now he's clear of "indebtedness." But I can't do things like that, and I don't think a bonfire will ever come of that. You've got to do the thing thoroughly or it won't stick in your head. As it is, all the fellows stand outside the lab and whisper to each other, "What's he asking? What's he asking?" Just like exams under the old system.

Now for the skworkers' pet aversions.

Elnikitka can't stand me, and Almakfish hates Sylva. He ploughed her in both physics and maths. Of course, she burst out crying, but he's a sarcastic fellow, for, while Sylva was explaining, he was making remarks about her bow. "You know how to wear a bow,

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but you're no good at maths, for all that." I think he has no right to say such things. He talks like a teacher of the old school.

Big Zinaida ill-treats Vanka. We call her that because she's so tall. When she walks through the hall she looks like the Sukharev tower, and we feel like the pedlars at the foot of it. Sometimes we even play this little game : no sooner does Big Zinaida appear than we all start :

" Pies, hot pies, jam pies, meat pies ! "

" Cigarettes, cigarettes ! Mind the militia ! "

" Good cloth, fine cloth. Buy some, comrade ! "

" Old trousers, good second-hand trousers ! "

And Big Zinaida crosses the hall and gapes with amusement, because she doesn't know what it's all about. Her mouth is enormous, with only one yellow tooth sticking out. And she must be thinking : " Isn't it nice to see the children play ! If anyone from the Centre arrived now, he *would* be pleased," and doesn't even suspect that she's acting the Sukharev tower in our market place. All the same, they're afraid of her, and, when she has anything to say to us, she stamps her foot and shouts " Silence ! " Then everybody shuts up, even though we

aren't soldiers who can be ordered about. She dislikes Vanka Petukhov because he sells cigarettes. In her estimation, only a stray would do this, and so she imagines that he drinks hooch, and gambles, and takes *marafet*,¹ and lives with women. And she tells him "he'll infect the whole school." No doubt Vanka smokes for the same reasons that I and Serezhka Blinov do, yet Big Zinaida always puts Serezhka forward as a model. As for the rest, it's all lies. It's true, of course, that the strays know Vanka, because they are illiterate and Vanka sometimes reads books to them ; some night I'll go there with him. They live in a tumbledown basement. The house isn't there any more ; all that's left is the basement in which they live. Vanka isn't afraid of them ; he says there are some good kids among them ; good enough, in fact, for our school, only they can't read or write. At first they used to give Vanka a rough time ; they would attack him and knock him off his feet, together with his stand, and pinch his cigarettes, and even hit him in the snout. But one day Vanka took some books there, and treated them all to cigarettes, and started reading to them. It appears they are as fond of fairy-tales as little children, and since that time they don't

¹ Cocaine.

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touch Vanka. Big Zinaida knows nothing about this, but always swears at Vanka. To be quite honest, Vanka and I once tried to smell *marafet*, only nothing came of it ; it started with a headache, and then we both got sick. Disgusting stuff ! And yet Vanka says the homeless simply can't live without it.

Nikpetozh is fair to everybody, and so the whole group trust him. And he also tells us he is proud of our group, because we have a collective consciousness. Personally, I don't quite see it. There is some collective consciousness among the fellows, but only among very few of the girls.

However, I've got to work now ; I'll try to solve some of Almakfish's little problems.

November 10th

To-day I went out for the first time, and went straight to school. They told me it had been very jolly at the demonstration, and a new fashion seems to have been started of going out barefoot and in phys-cultural¹ clothes. Even the girls do this, too. I think it's a good thing, for skirts absorb dust and are a waste of material ; women wear knickers, anyway. At the demonstration, too,

¹ Athletic.

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all the A.C.Y.¹ girls seems to have turned out in sporting knickers.

No sooner did I arrive than I got a note :
“ It’s been very lonely without you. Guess—who ? ” I don’t care.

I handed Almakfish my maths task ; that’s what staying at home does.

November 11th

It’s Sunday to-day. We had a very long general meeting. The old pu-council was being replaced by a new one. All went well till suddenly the chairman of the old council, Serezhka Blinov, declared that he would never take part in the pu-council again, and was withdrawing his candidature for ever. And the reason he gave was that the pu-council was “ an invalid on skworkers’ crutches.” But, as Serezhka used the expression “ skworkers ” instead of “ school workers,” a number of skworkers protested. Then Zin-Palna² spoke, and asked Serezhka whether he thought the pupils should take no notice at all of the school workers, or whether he still granted them the name of human

¹ Alliance of Communist Youth (in Russian, Komsomol-Kommunistichesky Soyuz Molodezhy).

² Short for Zinaida Pavlovna, the same person as Big Zinaida.

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beings. Serezhka Blinov was terribly hurt, and wanted to continue, but the fellows stopped him. Then he said that he considered all this greeting and standing up as a piece of prejudice, and that he wouldn't submit to it. Big Zinaida replied that she had always thought him a model pupil, and that she was wondering what fly had suddenly stung him. She also asked him whether he thought it a prejudice to wash and to brush one's hair. Serezhka again got annoyed, and refused to continue. Then Almakfish came forward and said it didn't surprise him at all, for *quantitatively, it was the abundance of the epoch ; and qualitatively, it stood beyond good and evil*. He had said just the same about my row with Elnikitka—which was also neither here nor there. In spite of all the persuasion the skworkers used, Serezhka Blinov stuck to his convictions, and most of the pupil supported him. Only some of the girls seemed to side with the skworkers, including Lina and Black Zoya. Every time Serezhka spoke Zoya would puff, “ Ff-oo, ff-oo, fff-oo.”

When all this was over, they proceeded to elect a new pu-council. Much to my surprise, and against my own will, I, too, was elected. So was Sylphida Dubinin. It seems to be her luck to get in wherever I am elected. Never mind ; she's unlike the other girls, and

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one can work with her. The pu-council is regarded as the highest organ of self-government. It controls the san-com,¹ the cult-com,² and all the other coms. Or, rather, it's supposed to control them ; but all the coms really do just whatever they please. Eln-ikitka met me in the passage and said : " Well, Citizen Riabtsov, and when do *you* expect to hand in your task ? "

I answered : " When I prepare it, Citizen Kaurova, I'll hand it in."

She said : " Everybody else has taken out their new November tasks, and you're still at the end of the queue."

" There's no rush," I said, and dashed off. I can't stand the woman.

November 13th

No sooner was I elected to the pu-council than an important affair cropped up. Thefts have been going on at school ever since the beginning of term. A book belonging to a senior pupil disappeared a month ago ; then on several occasions lunches and money have gone missing, and now Vanka Petukhov has lost six leemards.³ He left them in his

¹ Sanitary committee.

² Cultural committee.

³ Millions.

overcoat in the cloak-room, and when he came back the money was gone. Now, Serezhka Blinov had gone past the cloak-room shortly before and had noticed Aleshka Cheekin doing something inside. Of course, we at once wanted to ask Aleshka about it, but there was no sign of him ; so Sylphida and I and another pu-councillor of the third group had to go to Cheekin's house. He wasn't there. Cheekin's father, the shoemaker, opened the door to us. He was quite drunk.

"What do you want?"

We told him.

"That's he all right. I know he's a thief. Wait till I skin him, the son of a bitch!"

We were very sorry we had told him, in case it wasn't Aleshka after all, for the drunkard would give him a thrashing anyway. So Sylva and I remained in the yard to wait for him. We waited for several hours till it was quite dark. Suddenly he appeared. I went up to him and asked: "Why did you leave school so early?"

"Any business of yours?"

"Yes, it is ; because the money's gone."

Aleshka then gave me a shove with his shoulder and said: "I'm going upstairs. Let me go."

I then said: "You had better not go until we clear up this business, or else your father

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will knock your face in." Then Aleshka yelled : " So you told him, did you ? I tell you, I never touched your six leemards ! " And here he came close to me and hit me in the face. But Sylphida caught hold of him from behind, and we pressed him against the wall and asked : " And how do you know there were six leemards ? We never told you." In reply he roared and cursed obscenely and spat at us, and Sylva and I then noticed that he smelt of hooch. Finally he wrenched himself away, and, as it was too dark to pursue him, we decided to go back to the school. All the skworkers were waiting for us, and we told them everything. The suspicion grew, of course, although we still had no immediate evidence. Elnikitka was the skworker on duty, and she asked us why we hadn't searched him. We explained why it had been impossible ; but it really hadn't occurred to us. The matter was adjourned until the next day.

November 14th

Aleshka Cheekin turned up as though nothing at all had happened. He was taken at once to the pu-council.

" What were you doing in the cloak-room ? "

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"I was getting bread out of my coat pocket."

"Why did you leave school so early?"

"I had to go home."

"But Riabtsov and Dubinin didn't find you there."

"I went out again."

"Why did you smell of hooch?"

"They lied."

"And how did you know that six leemards exactly had been missing?"

"I still don't know."

Of course, that was a damned lie, because we hadn't told him anything and it was he who had been the first to shout about the six leemards. Well, it was quite clear that he had stolen the money, and we all stopped talking to him. Now the question is, how to settle this matter. The skworkers haven't said anything so far. I hope they won't chip in. On the other hand, the matter can't be dropped. The pu-council had a long discussion, but couldn't decide on anything. If we don't settle something to-morrow, the matter will have to be brought before a general meeting. Serezhka Blinov thought it wouldn't come to anything, and that it was Vanka Petukhov's fault to have left money in his coat pocket. That's so ; but, all the same, it won't do having thieves around the school ; and,

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then, what's the good of a pu-council if things don't come to anything?

November 15th

Zin-Palna has got herself into the Cheekin business. For two hours she lectured him face to face, and when he came out his eyes were all red, and he dashed right out of the building. The pu-council asked Zin-Palna what she meant by interfering in matters concerning none but the pupils themselves, and she replied that she was responsible for the order of the school, and that she hadn't been interfering at all, but that she had merely meant to exert some moral pressure upon Aleshka. So that's that. We'll bring it up at the general meeting.

Elnikitka was demonstrating through a microscope the reproduction of ferns in the lab when I asked her: "How, in your opinion, did man first originate—and, generally, the whole world?"

She went all red and said: "Why, of course, in the biological way."

"What sort of biological way?" I asked.

Elnikitka then began to explain all about cells and protoplasm, but that wasn't what I needed. So I asked: "What about God? Is there one, or isn't there?" And she

blushed again and said : " For some there is, for others there isn't. It's a private matter." At this point Black Zoya screamed like a lunatic : " I know why he's asking ! It's to prove that there is no God ! I believe in God, and it's my own business, and no one can forbid me."

I meant to tell her that no one had any intention of forbidding her, and that the question simply had to be solved as a matter of principle ; but she wouldn't even listen, and I thought she would again faint away. But here Elnikitka returned to her ferns. Zoya calmed down, and I decided to wait.

After the lab was over, Sylva came up to me and said : " Do you know that they go to church ? "

" Who are ' they ' ? " I asked.

" Zoya and Lina."

" And do you go, too ? "

" No, I don't. I don't believe in God, although mother scolds me for it," Sylva said. " My mother has old convictions, but my father is modern. I love both father and mother, but they constantly have rows, and even fights. Father took down the ikons and mother put them up again. At first I was on mother's side, but later father convinced me."

" And who is your father ? "

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“ He’s a compositor. Mind you, he was yellow himself at first, and even went on strike and opposed the Soviet power, but now he’s turned red. That’s what mother always grouses about. The other women in the house are also against father. When they all go into the yard to hang up the washing, it’s awful to listen to them.”

“ And did you not go to church before ? ”

“ I used to, while I was still called Doonia. But since the time father decided to call me Sylphida I stopped going to church. Mother won’t hear of ‘ Sylphida ’—she says it’s the name of a witch.”

I thought for a while, and then I asked Sylva to call me Vladlen. She said she would.

November 16th

To-day Black Zoya brought Almakfish her October task, and then she fainted again. It’s become quite a habit with her. Again they sprinkled water over her and put ammonia to her nose, and then she recovered. At the meeting of the pu-council the question was raised of curing people of this fainting habit, and I promised to cure Zoya. They agreed, on condition that my cure would not be injurious to her health. Why, naturally.

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November 17th

The pu-council had a business meeting about Aleshka Cheekin. The point is that he won't come to school and also won't go home. No one knows where he's gone. The school board is to be told that the pu-council has no objections to finding Cheekin through the police, only nothing is to be said about the theft.

November 23rd

I told Nikpetozh I wished to join the A.C.Y., and he approved, and said he would join it too if only he were as young as me.

November 24th

As soon as I heard them shout that Zoya had fainted again I dashed out into the yard and back again, and asked where she was. "In the lecture-hall," they said. I rushed straight in. There she was, stretched out as usual, all pale and with clenched teeth. "Lift her up a bit," I said. The fellows raised her up, and I dropped a snowball down her back. You should have seen her jump up and yell like mad !!! The fellows laughed, and Elnikitka came rushing along with her bottle of ammonia.

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"What's the matter?"

"Well, Zoya fainted, and Kostya Riabtsov has just cured her."

"How did he do that?"

"With snow."

Here Elnikitka pounced on me, and told me it was inhuman and uncomradelike and that she would report me to the general council. But Big Zinaida arrived, and looked at Zoya and at me, and said: "Elena Nikitchna, don't get excited! Zoya will have no more fainting fits."

Zoya gave her a glance, then puffed and steamed off. Then Zin-Palna turned to me: "Only next time you're to tell me first," and went away.

Why must I tell her? I'm on the pu-council, and needn't do anything of the kind.

The November tasks must soon be handed in, and I still haven't finished the October ones. The pu-council takes up so much time. And, besides the ed-committee wants me to contribute to the *Red Scholar*, and I haven't time for anything.

November 26th

The application lists for the A.C.Y. are out, and Sylva and I have applied to our

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Unit for membership. They say our Unit will soon be joined with a more active one. This is very important, for our meetings have been as dull as ditchwater.

November 27th

Vanka Petukhov took me to see the strays, and this is what happened. I'm very fond of mysteries, and all this had to be done very carefully, for if the skworkers get to know about it there will be quite a scandal. So Vanka called for me about nine, the usual time for going to the pictures. It was bitterly cold—about 20 below zero. When we got to that tumble-down basement they wouldn't let us in at first, but finally they did. The basement is enormous, and it's as cold there as in the street ; that's why they have little bonfires burning in every corner ; these are screened round with piles of rubbish, so that no light can be seen from the street. When Vanka and I crawled through the scattered masonry, it felt very creepy—just like the cinema when detectives creep about. At first they didn't touch us, because they know Vanka and regard him as one of their own. They wear terrible rags, and smell awful, just like a closet, and even the frost makes it no better. There's quite a crowd of them

in the basement, and they sit round the little bonfires ; one fire wouldn't be enough. When Vanka went in they ran towards him : " Giving us a story ? "

Vanka sat down beside one of the fires and read a tale about a silver saucer and a red-cheeked apple. Awful tripe. I didn't imagine such tripe could be printed in a book. Then the homeless lads asked for more, but Vanka refused. After that they produced a bottle of hooch and offered us some. Vanka sipped at it a little, but I refused. Then they played cards, and, as we got ready to go, one of them suddenly pulled me aside. I resisted but he dragged me close to a fire and yelled : " Come on, lads ! Here's the sneak ! "

I looked at him ; it was Aleshka Cheekin, only so dirty and ragged that I hardly recognised him. " So you've come here to nose about, you skunk, have you ? "

" Go to hell ! " I said, and tried to break loose. Vanka, of course, stuck up for me. So we broke away and ran. They followed us, and we had to defend ourselves ; then suddenly something hard hit me below the eye. It was so sore that I howled ; still, Vanka and I managed to get into the street and dashed away. At first they tried to chase us, but a lighted street with a milton wasn't far

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away. So they gave it up. My eye was swollen and hurt badly. Vanka and I wondered what to do, and whether to tell anyone about Cheekin. We decided to keep it to ourselves ; otherwise he'd get into a terrible mess, and it wouldn't do for him to show up at home ; his father might kill him.

Vanka told me there were " knockers " living in the same basement. This is how they work : one of them hides in a dark passage while the other walks about the street like one waiting for his girl. No sooner does some madam come along with a handbag than the one in the street throws himself violently under her feet and knocks her down, while the other leaps out of his hiding-place and snatches the bag, and then both dash off. There are also cloak-room thieves and pick-pockets. Some of them don't even talk Russian, but only Tartar ; but they're no worse at thieving than the others.

When I got home the bump under my eye had spread all over my cheek ; dad noticed it at once, and asked how it had happened. I lied and told him I had slipped in the street. He put a large copper to my eye, and the swelling went down slightly. To-morrow, all the same, I'll have to go to school with a bump.

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November 28th

Of course, they all inquired about the bump, and Sylva, especially, was so curious to know that I had to tell her to go to the devil. Elnikitka looked suspiciously at me and sniggered ; but I said nothing, in case another row would start.

In the *Red Scholar* a very good article appeared on our social work, written by me : " The Dalton Plan has been introduced here. Once a month tasks are given out on each subject, and we have to work them out independently. The teacher only tells you what books to consult, but you can't get these books anywhere, and to buy them is, of course, out of the question.

" Apart from studying, we have to attend to social duties ; for this purpose the most qualified ones are appointed, with the result that they have all the social work on their hands, while the others have nothing to do. I must also say that our working labs are so noisy that it is very hard to concentrate on anything, and therefore we have to take our work home. The studies finish at 7 p.m. and those with no social duties cheerfully go home ; but the pu-councillors and committee-workers are obliged to stay on. And one can't do much in an evening. Another meeting is necessary the next morning while the first

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set of pupils is at work. And when the second set gets together, there is again no way of working in the labs, because of the noise. It's the same every day. At the end of the month you have to hand in your tasks, and nothing is finished ; while those with no social duties quietly work at home and get everything done."

There's still some more, but this should be enough to show that a pu-councillor wouldn't even have time to croak if he wanted to. And on top of it all there is the ed-committee, and the decoration committee, and the class committee, and conversations with the sk-workers on behalf of your group. . . . Damn, damn, damn Dalton !

November 30th

To-morrow the November tasks are to be handed in, and I haven't anything ready ; heaven knows when I'll do it. Some of the others are in the same boat. It's a blessing my pu-council term is coming to an end, or else I'd never manage it. My chief hope is the winter vac. Thanks to the pu-council, Sylva, too, won't hand in anything. Damn that Dalton !

Sylva and I had a long walk after school,

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and she told me a lot about her life. It appears her father has put in a divorce claim, and now she doesn't know with whom she's going to live. Her parents always fight and quarrel. Then she asked me about the aims of life. I told her the real aim was to be useful to one's self and to others and to put up a fight for universal Communism. She then said she had felt so miserable that she had even thought of killing herself. I said that that was silly, for some people were more miserable than us ; the strays, for instance ; and suicide, I said, was intellectualism. In the old school the skworkers used to drive people to suicide, but we were strong enough to fight against them ; and then there was the A.C.Y., into which we would soon be admitted, seeing we were both of proletarian origin. After all that Sylva felt better, and I saw her home.

THIRD COPY-BOOK

December 3rd

My candidature and Sylva's for the A.C.Y. has been confirmed. That's grand ; only it's a nuisance, because we'll have to attend the Unit meetings. I've no time as it is. Ah, well ! I may manage somehow.

December 4th

Right in the middle of work the militia arrived. They asked for Zin-Palna, and said to her : " Is Alexei Cheekin one of your pupils ? " She said yes. " Well, then, please take him back against receipt, for he won't give us his address and we've nowhere to keep him."

" How did you get hold of him ? " Zin-Palna asked.

" He was caught during a raid on the strays."

Then Zin-Palna suddenly said : " No, I refuse to take him. Take him to the home for strays."

Some of the fellows heard her say this, and at once it went all round the school. The bell was rung for a general meeting. Everybody

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dropped his books there and then ; those answering questions in labs dashed off in the middle of a sentence. The skworkers were flabbergasted. The calling of a general meeting is usually announced beforehand, and here it came all of a sudden, right in the middle of work. All the pupils rushed into the hall. The shouting and screaming was awful. Zin-Palna appeared, looking pale, and the other skworkers also looked queer.

“ Who rang the bell for a general meeting ? ” Zin-Palna asked.

“ I did,” Serezhka Blinov said.

“ And for what reason, may I ask ? ”

“ For this reason,” he stammered, and turned pale. “ No sooner was this terrible injustice known than everyone wanted to protest.”

“ What injustice ? ” Zin-Palna asked.

“ Your refusal to take Cheekin back. Cheekin is our comrade, and it was your duty to consult us.”

And everybody roared : “ That’s right, Blinov, that’s right ! Down with the skworkers ! ”

Zin-Palna put up her hand on account of the noise, and stood like that for a long time ; then she said : “ This matter will have to be analysed in detail, since you say it’s an injustice. How could I take him back ? This

isn't an orphanage, and he can't live here. And, further, he has lived among the strays, where he may have caught every disease ; is he to infect you all ? He has a father, and ought to be sent home."

Here I got up and said : " You can't send him there, because his father will kill him. The old man's a drunkard, and Cheekin must have had a pretty poor time at home if he went to live among the strays in their tumbledown basement."

" What tumbledown basement is that ? " Zin-Palna asked.

" Well, just an ordinary one."

" And how do *you* know about it ? "

" Simply because I've been there and have seen it."

Then all the fellows shouted : " Hear, hear, Riabtsov ! That's a good fellow ! "

Then I said : " Don't yell like that for no reason at all. I've got to say this because I'm on the council."

" Now," Serezhka Blinov said, " the school protests against the fact that the inspectress has, without consulting the school, sent Cheekin off to the home for strays. The militia should be asked to bring him back to school at once."

" And what are we going to do with him ? " Zin-Palna asked.

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"We'll see to that later. We'll go to his house and ask his father not to beat him."

"And he'll obey you, of course," Elnikitka sniggered.

"He's more likely to obey *us* than *you*," Serezhka replied. "At any rate, we want to ask the school workers a question : does self-government mean anything, or not?"

"Answer ! answer !" all the fellows shouted.

"I am surprised," Zin-Palna said, "at your lack of organisation. You've interrupted the studies and have called a general meeting. Good and well, seeing there was a special occasion for it. But now see how this meeting is being conducted. No president, no secretary. The questions are all thrown in a heap. A question is asked about Cheekin, and, before anything has been decided, you switch on to something entirely different—a question of principle. I refuse to take any further part in such a meeting, which, to my mind, is a disgrace to the school." So she left ; and after her went Elnikitka ; and Almakfish, too, sneaked out. Nikpetozh alone remained, sitting there and not uttering a syllable. The crowd calmed down for a while, but the noise soon began again. Then Serezhka banged the table and said : "Personally, I consider that presidents at

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meetings are simply a bourgeois prejudice. One can get along quite well without them. Now, comrades, I propose that only those remain in the room who disapprove of our form of self-government. Then we'll decide what to do. All the others, and, of course, the school workers, must go."

Nikpetozh rose at once and went. Some of the very young ones followed him. Of the girls, Black Zoya and Lina G. walked out demonstratively. The others remained and discussed the statutes of a new union. "The union has decided not to recognise self-government and to work out its own statutes, which shall determine the conduct of its members. Compulsory greeting and rising to be abolished. Labs and lecture-rooms may be entered with hats on or without. In all other respects to follow the statutes which will be drawn up by Serezhka Blinov and a few others."

All at once I felt cheerful. Incidentally, too, my membership on the pu-council has come to an end.

December 5th

The school is now split into two parties—the "school" and the "union." It appeared

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that quite a number are on the side of the skworkers.

To-day the " school " party elected a new pu-council, and half the school attended the meeting. Our " union " also had a meeting, at which the " statute of the union " was approved. According to this statute everybody is equal, and things are to work through self-discipline. All such nonsense as compulsory greeting is to be suppressed, and each " unionist " must only look after his own behaviour. For example, he musn't fight and be noisy during studies. Serezhka Blinov has been appointed commissary of foreign affairs—to look after our relations with the skworkers and the school party. Serezhka's first mission is to make the skworkers bring Aleshka Cheekin back from the home for strays.

Then we had a meeting, at which we all spoke.

Afterwards Serezhka took me aside and told me that Nikpetozh liked me, and that I should therefore go and ask him, as well as the other skworkers, what they thought of our union. Of course I said I would. Only I didn't quite see what the skworkers' opinion had to do with it. All the same I went, and this is what Nikpetozh said : " Your experiment is interesting. But I feel you will

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soon be convinced that you can't do without discipline."

I said we would have self-discipline.

"Self-discipline," he said, "is two ends of a stick. On the one hand, it seems all right ; it cuts out coercion ; on the other hand it is much harder to practice than discipline from outside. Just think how you've got to watch yourself all the time. It soon gets very boring."

Then I asked him what he thought of the Zin-Palna business.

"I think you underestimate her," he said. "You imagine she wants to maintain her authority over the school, and is therefore the enemy of all the pupils. It isn't true. She's very fond of all the youngsters, and if she has to keep up some discipline it is simply because she feels her responsibility a great deal. As for your union, she won't interfere. 'Let them have it,' she says ; 'they'll realise the silliness of it soon enough.'"

I told Serezhka all this, but, though he listened carefully, he made no reply.

After school I saw Sylphida home ; then she saw me home, and on the way we talked about the union. She didn't believe it would last long, and said she had entered it merely out of comradeship. She was quite cheerful about everything. So was I, I said. When

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parting we shook hands, which we had never done before.

December 6th

Everything seems all right. The sk-workers pretend not to notice the union, and we ignore the skworkers. The union has decided not to make fun of the "school-children," and we don't touch them, especially as most of them are kids ; as for the older ones, they disagree with us on matters of principle.

I'm doing my hardest to get my tasks finished, so as to have my vac free of work. Nikpetozh has passed me. What I find most difficult is nat-history and maths.

December 7th

Vanka Petukhov didn't come to school, so I went to his house. I found him there, half murdered by the strays, who had thought him responsible for the police raid. They had also stolen his cigarette stand. He is thinking of entering the factory, now that young people are more readily taken on. "What about your studies?" I asked him, and he said that the young only worked six hours a

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day and were allowed various education facilities. His folks are all frantic, for he keeps them all. I felt very depressed, and went away.

December 8th

I was crossing the hall when a fight began between the "schoolboys" and the "unionists." They had provoked us by tripping up Volodka Schmerz. It was more or less a joke—not a regular fight at all. Still, Big Zinaida came dashing in, and stamped her feet and shouted like a lunatic : "Stop this, stop this." Of course, we stopped, and then she jumped on us and said we had turned the school into a street, that such enmity was inadmissible, and that the famous self-discipline of the "unionists" had shown what it was worth. I couldn't help answering her that self-discipline had nothing to do with it, because we hadn't fought, but had merely slapped each other on the back. But she interrupted me and said she would talk to me at the school council.

We shall see. I have at last passed in maths for October. There isn't so much left now, and I'm putting on steam.

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December 10th

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves during the long interval. The "unionists" went out into the yard and started playing football. It was fairly warm and the snow well stamped down, so it was easy to play. The "schoolboys" looked at us with envy; they would have liked to play also, but their school rules won't allow them to till spring—not in the school yard, at any rate. They may play any other games, but not football; Big Zinaida thinks it has a bad effect on the studies.

The interval was over, but we still went on playing. It's a pity it gets dark so early or else we could have gone on indefinitely. I scored ten points playing. At first the girls also played, but later they were thrown out after we'd formed a regular team.

December 11th

The day before yesterday I saw Black Zoya and Lina G. coming out of church, and yesterday, at the meeting of the Unit, it was decided to strengthen the anti-religious propaganda at school. On that occasion I went to the nat-history lab while there was still quite a crowd there, and asked Elnikitka.

"Elena Nikitichna," I said, "please tell me about God—is there one or not?"

"I have once already told you, Riahtsov—there is for some, and there isn't for others. It's a purely private matter."

"No, but generally?"

"There's no general view on the subject."

"Is there none in natural history either?"

"Natural history does not concern itself with religious questions."

So I couldn't get anything out of her. I will some day, though.

As I was going down the passage, Black Zoya overtook me and said: "Wait a minute."

I stopped, and she looked all crooked and shrivelled up as she said in a whisper: "I hate you, and don't regard you as a human being; but, all the same, I pity you; therefore I *warn* you that you'll have a heavy price to pay for it."

"And whom am I to pay?"

"Some day you'll see. The Holy Angels have forsaken you."

As she said that I roared till my belly ached.

"Give this as a present to your Holy Angels," I said, as I slapped her hard on the back. Then she puffed and went off. Naturally, I didn't chase her; I can't stand the

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girl. She smells of church and Lenten food.

To-day I took leave of my dear comrade, Vanka Petukhov. He's entering a factory, and came to school for the last time. I started telling him all about our school affairs, but it didn't seem to interest him any longer. His bruises have healed. He'll be earning 23 roubles 60,¹ and said he couldn't make any more by selling cigarettes.

I'm terribly sorry he's leaving us. There are few comrades as good as he, and he's a clever and kind-hearted fellow. To be friends with a fellow is quite different from being pally with girls, even when they're as intelligent as Sylva. Of course, I discuss many things with her, but not everything, because there are many things she wouldn't understand. And, then, you couldn't go to the strays with her. Of course, she might like to go, only they would kick her face to pieces and she wouldn't know how to defend herself. And, then, however hard girls may try, they are no good at football. And they are too fond of crying. All things considered, there are many drawbacks to being friends with them. It's quite different with a fellow. I'm really sorry about Vanka. We'll be

¹ In 1923 the gold rouble and the depreciated paper rouble existed side by side. Luckily for Vanka, his 23.60 were "new" roubles!

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seeing each other, of course, but it'll never be quite the same.

December 13th

To-day there was another row on account of the union. Almakfish ploughed Sylphida on her November work, although she says she had answered all his questions and proved the theorems. She said to him : " You've ploughed me because I'm in the union." Almakfish got savage, called her an impertinent minx, and threw her out of the lab. The whole group was very indignant at this, and we sent a delegation to Big Zinaida demanding that Almakfish should apologise to Sylphida. I was in the delegation, and when we entered the teachers' room we found Almakfish there. When he heard our demand he said : " All right, I'll apologise to her for losing my temper ; but she must first apologise to me for suspecting me of ulterior motives." Then I said : " I don't know whether you had any ulterior motives or not, but the whole school knows that you persecute her." At this Almakfish got wild, and called me a rude and impertinent ass, and threatened to leave the school if no measures were taken against me. And he flung his book on the table and went out.

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Zinaida kept me in the teachers' room and talked to me. She said that, if this went on, it would become impossible to work at the school, and that the union had made us forget our principal aim, which was to study. I agreed with her on this point, but told her that the skworkers were too apt to forget that we were as good people as they, only younger and perhaps less experienced, and that it didn't do calling us "children" and "impertinent asses," etc. Finally we decided that I would apologise to Almakfish and would try to persuade Sylphida to do the same.

At the meeting of the Unit it was proposed that the union and the skworkers should form a committee of co-operation in order to put an end to the conflict. Serezhka Blinov protested, but had to shut up after a representative of the Centre had asked him whether he wanted to see the school divided into two factions.

December 14th

The co-operative committee, on which the Unit is also represented, has decided on the abolition of compulsory greeting and rising. The pu-councillors' powers have been widened : matters concerning the pupils will

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henceforth be dealt with by the pu-council only. The skworkers' council and the school board will only concern themselves with matters in which both pupils and skworkers are involved. Football is to be permitted. The " union " has come to an end.

December 16th

I thought all trouble had come to an end, when, just before the vac, the skworkers decided to draw up a list of " characterisations." Each pupil was allowed to see the description of himself. I not only read mine, but also copied it out.

" RIABTSOV (KOSTYA). Age fifteen. General development decidedly backward for his age ; studies with great difficulty. Self-confidence colossal. Takes an exceptionally keen and enthusiastic part in social work, but loses his interest rapidly. Is greatly troubled and unbalanced by the advent of puberty, and is unusually rough, harsh, and impertinent. The exceptionally powerful activity of his sensory and motive centres puts him into a morbid and acute state of egocentricity. A semi-conscientious attitude to future adult life nourishes his intellect

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and any work that is not affected by his instincts. The results of this work, however, have hitherto been unimportant. A typical Stanley Hall adolescent."

Who's this Stanley Hall? Probably another bourgeois like Dalton. I went to ask Nikpetozh what "egocentricity" meant. He said it was practically the same as egoism, only worse. It turns out I'm an egoist. Now, I don't think I'm an egoist at all; but then it's no good arguing with the skworkers. But that's not the point. What *does* matter is that they think I study with difficulty. This may be true, only they don't say why. Well, it's because of Dalton. If there was no Dalton, I would be working no worse and no better than the others, and I would have some spare time for reading. Now, with Dalton there's never any left. Sylva's characterisation is something like mine. I talked to her, and she agreed with me that it was all Dalton's fault.

December 18th

General rejoicing! Aleshka Cheekin was brought back to school from the stray home. He looked very pale and thin, and wouldn't say a word. He must have had a pretty

rough time with the strays and at the stray home. After school we took him to his father. To-day the man was quite sober, and sat there sewing up a shoe, and his mother, who was busy stitching, wept when she saw Aleshka.

Then Serezhka Blinov said to old Cheekin: "Look here, Citizen Cheekin, we've brought your son back. The school vouches that henceforth he'll study and behave properly. Only the school demands that you stop beating him."

Old Cheekin put his awl on the table and said: "As far as I can see, you've no business at all to meddle in my private life. I can kill him or leave him alive, just as I please. And if he became a thief at your school, it's because you've taught him."

"Stealing isn't taught at our school," Serezhka retorted, "but, though he did misbehave, he's not going to do it again. Only remember, Citizen Cheekin, that if you touch him with even one finger you'll have the whole school on top of you, and you'll also get into court."

Then we left, but for a while we stood outside the window to see if everything was all right. We looked in, and saw Aleshka's mother give him food and his father talk to him as though nothing had happened.

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December 19th

On my way to school I met Lina G. She came up to me and said : " I ask you for the last time ; will you or won't you talk to me ? "

" And I tell you for the last time that I'll talk to you just as much as to any other girl."

She went away at once. The fool ! Coming along and asking me " for the last time," when she'd never asked me before. Didn't she herself change her seat to get away from me ? And now I've got to talk to her ! This must be Zoya's influence. Some girls are really mad.

At school I found them all swotting in the labs. Most of them haven't done their December tasks ; and half of them still have the November ones to do. I got several fellows together, and we all went to the lavatory, where we smoked and discussed a certain project.

December 21st

If necessary, I shall stay up till five, but I must write down exactly how it all happened.

The point is that two days ago we decided to put an end to Dalton, and we were busy all day yesterday preparing for it. By the

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time the people started coming in this morning, all the walls were covered with placards and inscriptions saying "Down with Dalton," "To hell with the bourgeois Dalton." All the fellows were delighted. We all crowded round the piano and began to rehearse a song that I had composed :

We hear them all groaning,
We hear them all yell,
"Down with the bourgeois !
Dalton to hell !"

And, when the skworkers came in, we greeted them with that song. They pretended not to notice, and went to their various labs. But no one presented himself for the December work, though some had prepared it. Instead of that, all the people rushed into the yard, where we had already prepared a straw effigy with a torn hat, and with a placard round its neck : "This is Lord Dalton." We seated the effigy right in the middle of the court, so that it could be seen from all the windows, and we danced round it and sang the Carmagnole. Then we set fire to it. The janitor came rushing along, but, when he realised there was no danger, he also looked on and laughed. The effigy flared up and crackled delightfully, while we

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stood round singing. We also sang another song :

“Bourgeois Dalton, here you burn ;
Go to hell, and don't return !”

And as we sang it we marched back into the school. All the skworkers were there, waiting for us, and in the hall Zin-Palnia asked us whether we would like to call a general meeting, or whether we were in such a mood that we would be better to go home. Although some of the young ones wanted to go home, we rang for a general meeting.

Before the meeting I went to the cloak-room, and I picked up a note lying in the passage. The note said :

“Let it be known to everyone that both of us are tired of life. These are the reasons. Firstly, everybody hurts us and teases us. And, further, one of us wants to pass into another world and the other is suffering from unrequited love. We forgive you all. We only ask for a church burial. I bequeath to-day's sandwiches to Kostya Riabtsov. I also forgive him. Whoever finds this note mustn't show it to anybody. We want to be buried together in the same coffin, but, if suicides can't be given a

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church burial, may we be buried in any other way ; a funeral Mass will do. Good-bye.

“ P.S.—You will find our dead bodies in the phys lab.

“ LINA G. AND ZOYA T.”

I rushed back to the hall, but as I ran I noticed another note stuck to the wall. I tore it down and read :

“ Good-bye, everybody, everybody, parents and schoolmates, and the whole school. Good-bye ! Our bodies are in the phys lab.—LINA AND ZOYA.”

The meeting had already started when I ran into the hall and yelled : “ Come quickly to the phys lab ! The girls are there committing suicide. There may still be time.”

Everyone jumped up and rushed to the lab, but I was one of the first to get there, only—there was no one in. We searched cupboards and shelves, as though they could have hidden there. Suddenly a voice shouted from the lecture-hall : “ Here they are, both of them.”

We all rushed to the lecture-hall, and there they were, both alive. They had hidden behind the desks and were weeping buckets.

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When they were dragged out I felt easier about the throat. Only then I noticed that during all the search something had seemed to be choking me.

Lina and Zoya were taken to the teachers' room and were given valerian drops, while the skworkers and fellows crowded round me to know how I had found out. Of course, I showed them both the notes and told them where I had found them. Then Zin-Palna said : " This is outrageous. The notes were put there on purpose ; they only wanted to attract attention, and had no intention of killing themselves. They will have to leave the school." I felt quite cheerful when she said this, and I noticed that no one contradicted Zin-Palna. Then Nikpetozh arrived and said he had asked them how they had meant to commit suicide, and they said they had wanted to suffocate. That's why they had closed the lid in the stove-pipe and had opened the smoke-pipe in the phys lab and had sat down there. Indeed, I had noticed a faint smell of smoke in the phys lab.

" But, then, why didn't they stay in the phys lab ? " Zin-Palna asked.

" They got frightened," said Nikpetozh with a smile, and everybody laughed.

Then Zin-Palna asked : " Can you

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imagine any suicide throwing notes all over the place, and even sticking them upon the wall ? ” The fellows all agreed.

“ Here is a clear case of simulation,” Zin-Palna said ; “ in any case, they knew perfectly well that someone would come into the phys lab long before they were dead. Their parents will have to be sent for.”

And Almakfish, who also stood there, said : “ From the philosophic standpoint, it shows *quantitatively, the abundance of the epoch ; and qualitatively, it stands beyond good and evil.* ” I’ve heard him say that several times already ; he seems to be turning into a gramophone.

But here Nikpetozh put up his hand and said : “ I want you all to listen to me. You have all heard and read that in the old days a school was different from what it is now. As in every new undertaking, there are many difficulties in the way of the new school. To-day you have demonstrated against the Dalton Plan. You dislike this way of working. Do you prefer to be driven along with a stick, as you were in the old school, with your brains dragged out of your head against your will ? I don’t deny that it is more difficult to work under the Dalton system, and there may be some mistakes in the way we use it, but gradually this will

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come right. Everyone who works makes mistakes. The new school is not growing up as calmly as we should like it to ; it progresses violently, encountering many obstacles. You have protested against self-government. You have protested against the Dalton Plan. Those are all obstacles. But little by little we shall overcome them. The girls have nearly created a new obstacle, but it's because they are silly and unconscientious, and the best thing to do is to pardon them. That's what I would expect from you ; you are a young and free people who have grown out of the Revolution, out of a young and stormy age. Our inspectress, Zinaida Pavlovna, doesn't seem to be willing to pardon the girls. I join in your request ; it won't be necessary to call for their parents, and it'll be a bad thing to expel them from school. Young men and women ! I believe we know how to influence them in such a way that they will abandon all thought of suicide, and will realise that in this new and free school there can be no room for gloom, despair, and death. Therefore, Zinaida Pavlovna, the pupils and I ask you to pardon Zoya and Lina."

Zin-Palna opened her mouth to say something, but we all shouted : " Pardon ! Pardon ! Pardon ! "

Zin-Palna even put her fingers in her

ears. She waited till the noise was over, and then she said : " The girls ought to be expelled. I am certain the Department of the People's Education would also look at it in that light. For my own part, however, I shall agree not to attach much importance to this matter, and even to vouch for the girls' future behaviour, if the school accepts one little condition."

" What condition ? " we asked.

" The condition is this—that you should all adopt a conscientious attitude to the Dalton Plan and not try to discredit it with your nonsensical demonstrations. It is easy to prove the difficulty of the Dalton method ; but you cannot prove its uselessness. And, in any case, if there's anything you want to prove, do it rationally, and not by burning dummies. That is my condition."

We listened in silence, and then Nik-petozh said : " Well, I think you ought to accept this. In any case, let us all get together and discuss the Dalton Plan in a sensible way. If we haven't had such a discussion, it was simply due to lack of time and other difficulties. Well, folks—yes or no ? "

I turned round ; all hands were raised. Reluctantly I followed suit.

" In this case," Zin-Palna said, " I shall

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pardon Lina and Zoya and take upon myself the discussion of the matter with the Education Department."

"Hurrah!" we shouted till my ears nearly burst. "Up with you, Nikpetozh, up!" And Nikpetozh flew high up in the air.

SECOND TERM

FIRST COPY-BOOK

January 1st, 1924

During the holidays I attended the A.C.Y.¹ Christmas festivities at the Workers' Club. Our Unit will probably be inscribed at that factory. Sylva and I arrived there at ten in the evening, and, though it hadn't started yet, it was very hot and crowded in the hall. About eleven a lecturer arrived, and started telling us about all kinds of gods. It might have been interesting had not the lecturer been tired and hoarse with speaking; everybody watched him drink water. Then, in the middle of the lecture, he suddenly looked at his watch and said: "Excuse me, comrades, but I must finish now, for I'm due to-night at five more places." So he jumped down from the platform and departed, and his lecture remained unfinished. It was hardly worth while starting, was it? After that, nothing happened for a long time, and I was beginning to feel sleepy when the curtain suddenly rose and the performance began. In the play, priests from various countries quarrel as to whose god is the best; then there suddenly comes in a worker with

¹ Alliance of Communist Youth.

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a broom and drives them all away. There was also a bourgeois fozzling round the place for some reason. Although he seemed quite unnecessary, he was very funny, and acted far better than the rest. The funniest thing was his pants sticking out from under his trouser-legs. He kept pulling them up all the time, but the next second down they would come again. The whole place roared with laughter.

I believe that in anti-religious propaganda there always ought to be something funny, or else it doesn't carry. As for speeches and lectures, especially like the one we heard that night, they could just as well be cut out altogether.

Last night (New Year's Eve) Sylva and I again went to a show called *Red Cinderella*, run by the first-grade children at our school. It's about two bourgeois sisters and a third one who's a washerwoman ; I don't know who wrote it, but I don't believe such a thing is possible, especially with all three living in the same house. Then the two bourgeois sisters go to a dance, and Red Cinderella is left behind to wash the dishes. Suddenly a fellow in a red shirt comes in and hands Cinderella a proclamation. She reads it, then puts on one of her sister's dresses and goes out.

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In the second act there's a dance, at which Cinderella's sisters and some other brightly dressed people are dancing. Then Cinderella comes running in and also begins to dance. A Prince goes up to her, but she gets frightened and runs away, and loses her slipper.

In the third act the Prince arrives at the house and starts trying on the slipper. It doesn't fit anyone except Cinderella. The Prince then says he wants to marry her, when suddenly the agitator in the red shirt appears again and declares that a revolt has broken out, and starts kicking the Prince in the backside. The Prince runs away through the audience, and the red shirt runs after him. Just then all the dancers of the second act and the three sisters appear on the stage and sing the International.

The thing was rather improbable as a whole, but you can't expect much more from such youngsters. But they acted so damn well that I felt like going on the stage myself. Why is it that we never have any shows? I must mention it to Nikpetozh. I usually prefer going to the cinema, because you don't have to think there ; but for an actor, I imagine, the theatre is far better, for on the screen he can never see any more than a shadow of himself.

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After the show the youngsters began to dance, and I went up to their skworkeress, Mary-Ivanna, and said : " Do you know, comrade, that dancing isn't allowed ? "

She answered : " In the first place, Comrade Riabtsov, don't worry about things that don't concern you—your second grade is sufficiently sick of you ; why should you also want to poke your nose into the first grade ? And, secondly, if you don't like it, you can go away. In any case I don't know what you are here for." I got terribly angry, but said nothing. However, I decided to report it all to the Unit.

Then I looked at the dancers and asked Sylva whether she could dance. She said she could, but didn't like it ; and yet her eyes all sparkled, and her face was flushed, and her bow hopped up and down to the music. I'm sure she would have danced if it hadn't been for me. Honestly, even I somehow felt differently about it. It was so bright, and the lamps were all lighted, and the music—though only one piano—carried you away so that you felt like doing something unusual—making a brilliant speech, or marching in front of a crowd carrying a banner, or at least turning a somersault. But there was no one there from our crowd except Sylva—And Sylva suddenly took my hand and said,

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“Vladlen”—she had agreed to call me that—“I mustn’t stay here any more. You may stay if you like, but I’ll go.”

Of course, I also went. It was no fun staying there alone. On our way Sylva said to me, “There are all kinds of things one would like to do ; but, if one did them, where would our ideology come in ?” That’s quite true.

January 5th

I have lately noticed how little I sleep at night, and am wondering why. At first I thought it was due to excessive work, but during the vac I hardly did a stroke. Some of my November tasks are still unfinished, to say nothing of the December ones. I also walk and go skating a great deal. I couldn’t understand it, and so I asked Serezhka Blinov about it. “Do you read much ?” he asked. I told him I did, and he said my sleeplessness was probably due to that. After I left him I tried to put it to the test, and then I realised that I hadn’t read so very much during the vac, but that there were certain passages which I had remembered particularly well, and of which I always thought at night. For instance, I read a story called *The Tryst*. In this story the

French governess lets a youngster see her leg. This story is in the little yellow-backed "Universal Series." It's curious that you can work together with girls, and fight with them, and paw them, without the slightest effect, and yet you've only got to read something like that and at once you can't get to sleep. I wonder really why?

January 11th

The Reel has published a list of "favourite school words"—fool, blockhead, beast, cow, ass, idiot, pig, swine, skunk, devil, snot nose, son of a bitch, sneak, mug, and many others. This is followed by a remark to the effect that there are some other words which the wall-sheet cannot publish, as the paper itself would turn red. "We leave this," the paper said, "to the *S.T.X.*"

We were looking at the paper in the passage when Nikpetozh came up to us and began to talk. He thought the wall-press very good for the school, and then he asked us: "How do you intend to tackle the swear-word problem?"

Here one of us blurted out that there was no harm in swearing, but others said they thought there was. So this is what Nikpetozh proposed:

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"You can't get rid of the swearing habit all at once, but if you watch yourselves you can do it gradually. For example, suppose we forbid at the next council the use of words 'beyond *hell*,' and let words 'as far as *hell*' be tolerated." We laughed, and agreed that words like 'cow, pig, fool, blockhead, and *hell*' could be used, while the others would already be 'beyond *hell*.'

I'm curious to know what'll come of this.

However, the decision wasn't made at an official general meeting, but simply in the passage, and such decisions aren't compulsory.

Then Nikpetozh called some of us into the sociology lab. There were no girls amongst us.

"I must also talk to you," he said, "of sexual and other obscene expressions. Obscenity, in my opinion, is a defilement of the language you speak. What would you say if some of you came to school all lousy and covered with dung?"

We said that that wouldn't do at all.

"Well, obscene swearing is the same thing. It's the dirt and vermin of the mind. The old school was unable to grapple with the problem, because the system was based on coercion, and the use of obscene language was a form of protest. You, on the other hand, have nothing to protest against."

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There was nothing we could answer. I noticed that this wasn't the first time that Nikpetozh had brought up the question.

January 12th

The cabbage nights ! What fun they must be ! Vanya Palkin, of Group IV, told me about them as a dead secret. I can't even explain them here, in case I get into trouble. Only I'm wondering whether they aren't contrary to the A.C.Y. ideology.

January 13th

To-day, after school, one of the girls sat down to the piano and started banging some dance tunes. All the girls, both the big ones and the small ones, immediately hopped round the room, as though they had arranged it beforehand. I knew quite well that dances were taboo, so I called in some of the lads and we made the girls stumble over our legs. They shrieked and squealed, and the skworkers came running along and an extempore meeting began. I like extempore meetings much better than the official kind, with its reading of minutes, etc., for here everybody gets on his hind legs, and there's always some question to get excited about.

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Zin-Palna asked why the fellows objected to dancing. "Because it shows a lack of ideological restraint," said Serezhka Blinov. "In dancing there is nothing scientific and rational; it's nothing but mutual sex excitement."

Here Elnikitka jumped up and said: "The real reason why the boys object to dancing is that they don't know how to dance. Football has nothing rational or scientific in it; it is merely rough; yet the boys will play football."

Here all the lads shouted that football was phys-culture.

"In that case," Black Zoya said, "dancing is also phys-culture."

"No, I don't agree with this," said Big Zinaida. "Dancing is not phys-culture. But, all the same, it is an exciting pastime, and, if it's to be suppressed, it ought to be replaced by something else. The question is, how? I would suggest you organise some social games, and I'll be glad to help you in this."

To this I replied:

"This isn't a kindergarten, to play blind man's buff with the girls. There is a perfectly rational form of amusement to which, I am sure, no one will object. I was recently at the first grade, where I saw the youngsters do a play. I felt like going on the stage myself.

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Why don't we have theatrical performances? I consider this a serious want."

"You are quite right," said Zin-Palna, "but so far there's been no one to undertake it. If any of the school workers can take charge of the matter, I shall have nothing against it."

We crowded noisily round Nikpetozh, and he agreed to arrange a play, and said he would look out for a suitable piece. After that we dispersed, and Vanya Palkin took me aside and made me swear it wouldn't go any further.

To-night, he said, was old New Year's Eve,¹ and there would be a cabbage night at his house to celebrate it. He gave me the address.

I am due there at nine o'clock, and now it is eight-thirty.

I told dad I was going to the expensive seats at the cinema, and he gave me three milliards.

January 14th

I mustn't write anything about the cabbage nights ; if I could I would write heaps. But it's a dead secret.

I was terribly surprised to see Lina there.

¹ December 31st of the pre-revolution calendar coincided with January 13th of the new calendar.

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January 15th

Work at school is progressing as usual, and now that I'm no longer on the pu-council, I find it much easier. I've done all the November work and part of the December work.

To-day Nikpetozh arrived with a book in his hand and took us all to the lecture-hall.

"Riabtsov," he said, "has suggested a theatrical show, and I think it a very good idea. Only, as there are no good modern plays, I propose we perform a play by Shakespeare called *Hamlet*. I warn you that at first sight, there is nothing revolutionary in it, but I assure you that that's only on the surface. It embodies a colossal internal protest."

Then he started reading it aloud to us. He reads very well, and I like listening to him ; only there is a lot of bunk in the play. But, of course, this is pardonable, for the play was written five hundred years ago, and Shakespeare used to write for the Queen and not for the proletariat.

I shall mention here what I stated openly at the meeting regarding Shakespeare's faults.

At the beginning of the play we are told how the watchman stands outside the castle and how a ghost appears. Then Hamlet

comes in, and the ghost takes him off to some far-off place and starts telling him how he (i.e. the ghost) had been "dispatched." It turns out to be his father's ghost, and his father was poisoned by this man's brother—that's to say, by Hamlet's uncle, who in his turn married Hamlet's mother and became King in place of Hamlet's father. Two things seem to be absurd. First of all, there is no such thing as a ghost ; but, even supposing that one did appear, and supposing I were Hamlet, I wouldn't stop to talk to him, but would run for my life ; for you couldn't protect yourself with any weapon against a ghost, in case he suddenly took a fancy to fight you or strangle you. Secondly, the ghost spins out a long yarn of how he was killed by poison that was poured into his ear while he was asleep. I've never heard of anyone being killed that way. However, I don't know ; after all, it may have happened five hundred years ago.

But here is a much more important fault of Shakespeare's. There's a kind of old man in the play called Polonius, who has a daughter called Ophelia and a son called Laertes. Hamlet is pally with the Ophelia girl, and seems to be a bit dotty about her, although that isn't quite clear. Laertes lives in France, and the old man is worried in case he goes a

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bit too fast. Then everybody begins to notice that Hamlet has become upset about something, and they imagine it's on account of Ophelia, but he's really nervous about the ghost, and even pretends to be mad. But he does so on purpose, for he wants to find out whether the ghost has told him the truth about the poisoning or whether it was all lies. The crazy Hamlet arranges a theatrical performance, in which he shows how his father, the King, is being poisoned. And the new King, Hamlet's uncle, comes to the show, together with Hamlet's mother. This is where the thing is most absurd. I'm sure no lunatic would be allowed to stage a theatrical show nowadays, but would at once be locked up in an asylum. However, the King and Queen sit down calmly and look at the crazy show, but when they see what's being performed they dash right out. Then Hamlet shows his craziness more than ever. Instead of sitting on a chair like the rest, he sits down on the floor, and interrupts the show with every kind of nonsense, and then suddenly jumps up and roars :

“Why, let the stricken deer go weep . . .”

The King gets savage, and that's just what Hamlet wants. He now knows that the King has poisoned his father. In spite of his

bourgeois origin, Hamlet isn't a brainless fellow. After that Hamlet has a talk with his mother, who seems to be begging his pardon, while that old duffer, Polonius, is hiding behind a curtain to hear what she says. Hamlet notices Polonius, and runs his sword through the curtain, and kills him like a rat. The Ophelia girl goes really crazy over it, and her brother Laertes returns from France and wants to murder Hamlet for having killed off his dad. So Laertes poisons his sword and challenges Hamlet to a "duel" (that is what they used to call it when two people fought with one another), and, to make quite sure that Hamlet will be killed, the King also keeps a cup of poison ready for him. Only somehow it turns out that Hamlet kills off Laertes, and the Queen gets the drink from the poisoned cup, and Hamlet runs his sword through the King and then dies himself. Just before that there is a scene in which Hamlet talks to skulls, which is altogether ridiculous. Who but a lunatic would speak to skulls? The point is that he isn't a lunatic, but only pretends to be one. Most of the fellows were in favour of producing this piece. I said nothing, because I thought a modern play would be more suitable—something with barricades and revolutionary fights.

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Black Zoya was at the reading, but kept quiet. For some reason Lina wasn't there.

January 16th

The cabbage nights are a dead secret, and I haven't breathed a word to anyone. Vanya Palkin says everybody keeps it quiet. That's very important.

All the same, I have seriously been wondering whether these cabbage evenings can go together with our A.C.Y. ideology, and generally with the Communist struggle. For some reason I don't trust Sylva in this matter. And Vanya Palkin says I mustn't mention it to her. He says she's not *the kind*. But there is no one else I can consult. Vanya Palkin isn't A.C.Y., but to ask some of the older members of the Alliance might give the whole show away. I don't know what to do.

January 17th

To-day our revolt against Dalton came to an end. An instructor arrived and a general meeting was called, at which the organisation of the school in general and the work with the Dalton Plan were discussed. It was terribly dull, and I was busy most of the time drawing a poster. Zin-Palna told the instructor how we had burned "Lord

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Dalton's " effigy. It was quite unnecessary to tell him about a thing that was no more than a childish joke. The instructor, however, laughed and said :

" You've got on happily up till now without any outside interference. But now you suddenly can't come to an understanding. Both the school workers and the pupils are responsible for this, and it seems to me that the application of a surgical instrument (in the form of my personal interference) will be necessary. In future I hope you will manage without this instrument. But now, young people, I ask you, Wherein do you see the faults of the Dalton Plan, and how can they be eliminated ? "

All kinds of complaints were showered upon the instructor from every side. There were no books in the labs, there wasn't enough time for study ; and so forth. Then I got up.

" It isn't a question of labs," I said, " but the trouble is that with the Dalton Plan your head falls to pieces, and your hands get all shaky."

They all roared with laughter.

" Why do you laugh ? " I said. " There's nothing funny in not being able to sleep all night, especially when one's on the pucouncil. We're all in the same boat. Since

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the Dalton method was introduced things have gone from bad to worse ; there never used to be any work overdue in our group, and now there is."

"Why, whose work is overdue?" Zin-Palna asked.

"Mine," I said, and again they all laughed.

"I tell you there is nothing funny in that," I said, and got angry. "Dalton hangs round my neck like a bag of corn. Whatever I do, I am constantly reminded of the tasks that haven't been prepared. Either maths, or nat-history, or diagrams. There is no time and no place for work, and there's even less time for reading and skating."

Elnikitka then chipped in with her cattish snigger : "I seem to have seen you pretty often on the skating-pond during the vac for all that."

"I suppose I'm to stick indoors all the time," I retorted. "Is that what you mean?"

Then the instructor asked why my tasks were so often overdue.

"I never had any time while I was on the pu-council."

Then the instructor asked Zin-Palna whether the work of the others was also overdue.

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"No," she said, "most of them work regularly."

Alas ! I had badly put my foot in it.

The Dalton Plan has remained ; but it would have remained even if everybody's work had been overdue.

At our school the skworkers still make all the decisions, and the pupils are like the peasant serfs that Nikpetozh used to tell us about. They were only free after they had paid the master their yearly tribute, and instructors and any other people from above always side with the skworkers. I believe it's different in other schools. And what's most revolting is that our second-grade people are still treated as kids. In conclusion Zin-Palna said :

"The school has now run back into its natural groove. Let us learn, learn, and learn ! You remember who said that ?"

"Lenin, Lenin !" everybody shouted.

The meeting then broke up.

January 18th

The parts have been distributed, and Serezhka Blinov is to play Hamlet. I wouldn't have done any worse than he, yet I've only been given the part of Laertes ; there is, of course, some fencing to do ;

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still, it's not quite the same. Ah ! well, I'll just have to do Laertes ; it's better than nothing. To-day I already tried to fence and die. It goes all right, especially this bit :

“ It is here, Hamlet ; Hamlet, thou art slain ;
No medicine in the world can do thee good.”

And then this one :

“ Lo ! here I lie,
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned ;
I can no more ; the King, the King's to blame.”

The last “ King ” has to be uttered in a whisper, as though one was prompting at an exam. Matters didn't go so well with the women. Not counting the various maid-servants, there are really only two women's parts in the play—Ophelia and the Queen. And all the girls naturally wanted to play Ophelia. Thirty-two of them came along from various groups, all clamouring for the part. Nikpetozh tried them out one after another and showed them what gestures to make. In the end he still couldn't decide, and put it off till to-morrow. No sooner was he gone than they started an awful kick-up. One of them yelled, “ You can't do it at all ; you haven't even the right voice for it.” Another one said : “ You're far too small ” ;

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and still another one ; “ If I’m not given Ophelia I shan’t act at all ” ; and all yelling at the same time, so that you couldn’t make head or tail of it. I advised them to toss for it, but they all jumped on me. I hardly got away. Lina wasn’t there, nor had she been at school all day ; and Black Zoya kept very quiet and hadn’t even gone up for a test. She has been very reserved ever since the day she and Lina had tried to commit suicide. Sylva didn’t come to the meeting either ; she said she lacked theatrical talent. I tried to persuade her, but she wouldn’t. She told me she had tried to act, but without success.

January 19th

Though his father is a Sukharev street salesman, Vanya Palkin is first in the fourth group. The skworkers think him a very able fellow. He has, indeed, always been very useful whenever I’ve asked him to solve some problem for me and to help me out in history. He seems to have a huge imagination. Once last year, when he was telling me about America, he suddenly declared he had been there himself. However, I didn’t believe him, because he doesn’t know American,

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which he himself admitted. But at the time I pretended I believed him, and then he told me as a dead secret that he proposed to go there again and might take me with him.

Then I realised that it was all bluff, but I didn't show it. All the same, what he said about the cabbage nights was quite true. But I still have a feeling they don't quite agree with the ideology.

To-day *Hamlet* was rehearsed, and in the afternoon a new *Reel* appeared, showing Serezhka Blinov shaking his fists and a crowd of youngsters rushing along from all sides. And below it this notice :

“What's wrong, citizens ? Anyone been murdered ? Why all this noise ? ”

“*Hamlet* is being rehearsed.”

It certainly was noisy. Serezhka has a hoarse bass voice, and roars like a beast.

Black Zoya tried to play Ophelia, and Nikpetozh said she didn't do badly. Really, not badly, but I think she might do better. I have already learned how to use a sword (i.e. a walking-stick), and I wanted to show how I could do it, but we didn't get as far as the last act.

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January 22nd

Everything seems over, and black gloom has spread over the world. It is three in the morning, and I'm still at my desk, unable to understand and realise. At first I thought I was kidding myself; but no! it's quite serious. All our school affairs seem terribly small and disgusting, as though we were all little bugs one can only see through a microscope.

The frost has drawn little flowers on the window-panes, and they look to me like ornaments you see on coffins. Sad music still sounds in my ears, and black ribbons float before my eyes. My head is one big muddle; I can't think for a second.

(The three following pages of the diary are smeared over with ink.)

January 30th

I tried to describe in verse all that I had seen, but it didn't come out right. Other words are needed.

During the past week I have grown older by ten years, and I cannot find the words which, as a boy, I still might have invented.

January 31st

School hasn't even yet got back to normal.

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V.I. Lenin's death had shocked us so deeply, and our ordinary everyday life had been so upset by it that neither study nor recreation have been properly resumed. The skworkers don't even mention tasks. Everyone realises that, though we must study, it can't be done at once. During the past days Nikpetozh has been reading aloud to us, and the girls often weep in corners. Black Zoya will play Ophelia—that's definite. We had a rehearsal to-day, but it didn't go properly either. They all recited their parts in a dreary tone, without showing any real interest.

Zinaida Pavlovna said that study was now the most important thing, and that we ought to do our best to overcome all difficulties. She's quite right.

SECOND COPY-BOOK

The Reel has started an inquiry among the first three groups on the question "What is the Aim of Life?"

Now that everybody is in a very serious mood, quite a large number of replies has been sent in. I have copied down the most interesting.

FIRST GROUP (SECTION A)

"(1) The aim of life is to study and to find out what has so far been unknown." ("What bunk!"—Vladlen Riabtsov.)

"(2) Our aim is to study, to enjoy ourselves, to suffer, and to help others. There are many things we can live for."

FIRST GROUP (SECTION B)

"(1) We live and study in order to create a powerful and civilised country and to help our neighbours. We must remember that the sea is made of little drops, and every man is a little drop which lives, works and does all kinds of big, small, and middle-sized things. But if one drop is idle, it interferes with the sea; then there is no room for it

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in the sea, and it must be got rid of. Therefore, let us acquire knowledge and protect Soviet Russia against the damned bourgeoisie."

"(2) Enjoyment is our aim. We study so that we may live in decent conditions while we rest. We find enjoyment in reading an interesting book or in listening to interesting stories. It is also enjoyable to finish one's tasks."

"(3) I live in order to study and to be educated. I don't want to be uneducated, for then I would be oppressed on all sides."

SECOND GROUP

"(1) Our aim is to learn and to be of use to the State, and partly also to one's self. If I am of no use to myself, I shall die without having lived. Therefore one has to be useful."

"(2) Live, in order to live."

"(3) A poor man lives and works and loses his time in order to make a living ; a bourgeois also lives in order to make a good living (if he's unconscientious). A man with a social duty also tries to make life better for others, even though he sometimes perishes himself. People therefore live to make life better, if not for themselves, at least for others. And we now study so that we may

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improve either our own life or the lives of others. Our late teacher, Vladimir Ilyitch,¹ has given us a good example."

"(4) One lives in order to satisfy one's needs." ("I'd like to know who wrote this. The editors of *The Reel* won't tell. Yet an answer like this shows a total lack of consciousness, the mind of a brute rather than of a human being."—Vladlen Riabtsov.)

"(5) The aim consists in creating a solid future for the following generation."

"(6) To live with only one aim—to defend the proletariat and preserve its achievements at any price."

"(7) It is often said that the one aim of life is to prepare a new civilisation for the rising generation. This doesn't satisfy me in the least. My idea of a good life is to live calmly and free from care, with only little excitements now and then." ("Why are there so many wretched bourgeois in our school?"—Vladlen Riabtsov.)

THE THIRD GROUP (*Ours*)

"(1) It is important not to stand apart and not to look on while others fight and conquer; you must also take part in the struggle."

¹ Lenin.

“(2) Not to have to be responsible to anyone, but to be able to arrive at one’s own conclusions.” (“Oh ! Oh ! Oh !”—Vladlen Riabtsov.)

(3) “The editor of *The Reel* who asks this question is, evidently, craving to enter the field of philosophy, or else he has become frightened and overwhelmed by the insignificance of human life. If the former, his impulse is good. If the latter, it is bad.

“The only answer to the question, however strange or one-sided it may seem, is ‘Living for the sake of living.’ The aim and essence of human life is contained in life itself, in the process of living. To attain this ideal in life it is necessary above all to love life, and to fling oneself into its whirlpool ; only then can one fully realise the meaning of life and comprehend its aims. Life is such a curious business that no theory is needed to counterbalance the achievements of man ; if one can only understand its practice, one will also be able to understand the theory. This is particularly noticeable in the present stormy surroundings when it is so easy to take sides in social and political life or choose a subject of special interest and then go on and on and rejoice at the vital new theory that is being created around us.

“In the old days, when teaching was dry

and uninteresting, and when the pupils, for want of anything better to do, used to gaze at the moon and listen to nightingales and ponder over the aimlessness of life until finally they lost all taste and appetite for it, they used to commit suicide, leaving notes behind saying that 'Life wasn't worth living.' We find this attitude in the literature written before the Revolution. Just read Chekhov's *Dreary Story* or Andreyev's *Life of a Man* and you will smile indulgently and wonder whether writers and characters so utterly detached from life, and so ignorant of it, could ever really have existed.

"Yes, there have been such people, and they lived and thought ; they looked for life in theories, and couldn't find it there. And then these dreamers came badly to grief ; they belonged to our poor shipwrecked intelligentsia. . . . And so, if the question as to the aim of life is asked in a pessimistic mood, it is utterly out of place in the world of to-day, which is a world of such vital activity. But as a sane and natural question its value cannot be denied. I do not agree with L. Tolstoy, who said that it was just as useless for a man to question the aim of life as it is for a horse driven by its master to inquire about its destiny. On the contrary, one must believe in the boundlessness of the

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human mind. But, even in discussing theoretical questions, we must still turn to actual life ; for mental progress is only achieved by applying one's energies to the various branches of knowledge, that is, by entering into life itself. Whoever disagrees with this, and seeks to find the real meaning of life within his own soul, believing only in its depth, despising active life, and filled with despair at the thought of his own insignificance, such a man is unnecessary to this world, and his soul becomes shallow, for depth is only attained through harmony with life. Why, such a man would do best if—to use a phrase of one of Dostoievsky's characters—he 'humbly gave back to God his entrance-ticket into life.' ” (“One of the skworkers must have written this.”—V. Riabtsov.)

February 5th

Last evening we had a cabbage night. In spite of it all I didn't feel really cheerful. I constantly thought of the aim of life. I saw Lina there, and asked her why she didn't come to school, but she said it was none of my business. I called her a silly goose.

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February 6th

To-day we had another rehearsal of *Hamlet*. It went so well that I am still thrilled. Serezhka Blinov growled and roared like a bull, and dashed about the stage like mad. Then he invented another stunt ; after talking to the gravedigger, he doesn't drop the skull into the grave, but throws it at the gravedigger himself, so as to show how really mad he is. It's awfully effective. In the duel I knocked the sword out of his hand instead of the other way round. We did this until Nikpetozh told us we would have to follow Shakespeare's instructions. Then why doesn't Serezhka learn how to fence properly ? Black Zoya managed somehow to wear a different dress in each act ; she said it would have to be done like that at the show, and that it was best to do it now in order to get used to it. She is particularly good in the scene in which she goes mad and sings her crazy songs. She appears covered with paper flowers, and with her hair flowing and her eyes are wild, and she sings so very, very softly that it gives you quite a weird, creepy feeling. And she seemed much prettier than usual ; through changing dresses, I suppose.

The Queen has ten maids-in-waiting, and they crowd our little stage so badly that there

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is simply no room to move. They quarrelled and fought all the time, and interrupted the rehearsal several times.

February 8th

It is a week since I asked Nikpetozh to lend me *The College Boys*,¹ from which he read to us about Kartashov and Kornev. There was a bit in the book which I specially remembered—how Tyoma Kartashov, coming home one day, saw a girl's leg, and how—I can hardly sleep now for thinking of the girl, and, of course—— It's sickening, and my head feels like lead, and I can hardly do any work.

February 10th

The *EX* has come out, with a great deal about *The Reel* in it and about its inquiry into the aims of life. Here's the article published in it :

“*On the Aims of Life at our School*

“ *The Reel* has recently been engaged in profound philosophy, and has raised the problem of the aim of life in general. *EX*, trying, as usual, to make use of everything

¹ By Garin-Mikhailovsky.

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for the special benefit of the school, takes this opportunity of talking of the aims of life at our school. We propose to use the inductive method, i.e. by proceeding from the particular to the general. For the sake of brevity let us take the quintessence of all the tendencies existing at our school.

“(1) Learn what is still unknown.
Example : discover perpetual motion.

“(2) Knowledge is light, ignorance is darkness !!!

“(3) Long live dancing !

“(4) Long live the quiet life with few excitements ! !

“(5) Satisfy your needs ! Especially don't forget to blow your nose and go to the ——

“Too much study is harmful to the young. Long live the freedom of time !

“And, to turn from the particular to the general, let us exclaim :

“Kick the blighter ! We know him !
He's staying next door ! ”

I think this is silly, and not even funny. The aim of life is a serious matter. Once you know it everything is clear, but it's very, very difficult if you don't know.

February 11th

Yesterday I saw my dear comrade Vanka Petukhov. He's doing well at the factory, and is making enough to support his family. He advised me to go to the factory, too, but I said I would rather finish studying first. I spoke about the aims of life to him, and he said quite simply and clearly, "We live in order to replace the rotten old system by a new, bright, and happy system called Communism.

I used to think so too, but since *The Reel* inquiry I have been a bit puzzled. Then we talked about the sex problem. He said : "At the factory there is no such problem. If you like a girl you simply go up to her and say : 'I like you, Manka or Lenka. Will you walk out with me ?' If she won't she'll turn her back on you, and if she will she'll walk out." "How do you mean ?" I said. "In the real sense ?" "Why, of course, in the real sense. Like husband and wife. It's just as important as food. You can't live without food ; and you can't live without the other thing."

"But if there's a kid ?"

"You silly fool ! As if anyone thought of kids while he was walking out !"

"And what about yourself ?"

"Why, same as the rest."

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I'm sure it's bunk—about himself, at any rate.

February 12th

The rehearsals are in full swing. Serezhka Blinov has got quite hoarse with shouting ; but it's a good thing, for now he sounds more impressive than ever. And he keeps on inventing new stunts. For example, when the King was leaving the stage to-day Serezhka suddenly shouted :

“Why, let the stricken deer go weep,”

and dashed after him and caught him by the throat and tried to choke him. I really thought he had gone mad. Nikpetozh hopped on to the stage and grabbed Serezhka by the shoulder and said : “What on earth——”

“Well, I must show the King that I'm mad,” Serezhka said.

“But there is nothing like that in Shakespeare.”

“What do I care? It's the producer's invention.”

“But I am the producer,” said Nikpetozh, “and not you, and only one person at a time can direct a show. If we followed your advice, Hamlet would have to climb the walls and set the house on fire.”

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"The actors must have freedom," said Serezhka, "otherwise they are not actors, but only marionettes or puppets."

"I am giving you plenty of freedom," said Nikpetozh, "only no choking, please."

"Even here the skworkers want it their own way," Serezhka grunted.

I quite agree that the producer ought to give the actors some liberty. Now, I play Laertes, and Hamlet is supposed to knock the sword out of my hand. I want to do it this way : I'd first knock Hamlet's sword away and then generously let him pick it up again, and then he could knock out mine.

When I came home I found dad in a state of nervous excitement. I asked him what was wrong, and, instead of answering, he handed me a piece of paper. I noticed how his hand trembled. The paper said :

"Let me draw your attention to the conduct of your son Constantine. He has recently greatly changed for the worse. He mixes with strange company, drinking till he's quite drunk, and he has also learned to smoke strong cigarettes. Kostya is careful to hide all his adventures from you. Kostya and a number of other boys and girls have paid two milliards and joined a most undesirable and immoral

circle. On Saturday the members of this circle are going to meet somewhere near the Ivan Park, and spend the night in a wild orgy, drinking heavily. Kostya will no doubt make a good excuse for staying out on Saturday night. This letter may seem a stupid and incredible lie ; but you can easily verify it. Kostya has learned how to deceive you, and only you will be able to influence him in the right direction."

I felt quite giddy when I read it. Dad then said to me : " Kostya, tell your old man—is this true ? "

" No, daddy, it is not true," I said, and saw spots before my eyes, " for, if it were true, you would have noticed it long ago. Did I ever smell of drink when I came home at night ? Tell me frankly, did I ? "

" No, I don't think so. But, then, I never sniffed at you specially."

" But you have eyes, daddy. You would have noticed at once. I am here every day, and we have meetings every day, and I come home as tired as a dog, and then I sit down to read. I *do* smoke, and, if I haven't told you, it is because I thought it might hurt you. But it's all lies about the drinking."

The old man didn't believe me. How could

I convince him ? And at the same time the thought kept running through my head : “ What skunk could have written this ? Written all in capital letters, so that no one can recognise the writing. Surely it isn’t——”

And meantime dad marched up and down, with his hands shaking, and I felt sorrier for him than I can say. I put my arms round him, and said ; “ Daddy, you must believe me ; it is all bunk. I have never lied to you before ; why should I lie to you now ? Don’t worry—and go to bed. And, if you like, you can go to school to-morrow and ask our inspectress whether this is like me or not. Will you do that ? ”

He then looked into my eyes and said he wouldn’t go anywhere, and that he believed me. But I am still worried. I’ll get to the bottom of this if I die. Who wrote it ? I couldn’t sleep at night. For the first time it has struck me how hard it is to lie to an old man like mine.

February 13th

Well, well ! So, after all, it wasn’t only my dad ; other fathers and mothers have received the same kind of letter. Five or six of them came to school to-day and asked for

Zin-Palna. She called in all their children and kept them there for a long time. The fellows came out at last looking as hot and red as if they'd been to the baths. I immediately asked them what was wrong, but they wouldn't say a word. Vanya Palkin walks about looking quite pale and sick, because he is sure that the cabbage nights have been reported and he is frightened he'll get it in the neck. I don't think there's anything to be frightened about. If it's found out it'll have to be admitted ; all the same, it ought to be kept dark, if it's at all possible.

February 16th

Lina suddenly appeared to-day. She was supposed to have been ill. When I saw her, her eyes were all red, because her father had received a letter also. She whimpered all day long, till I could stand it no longer and said to her, "Your hysterics will get us all into a fix. So far no one knows anything for certain, and everything may still be all right."

And then she wept louder than ever, and howled through her tears, "It's all your fault ! You alone are to blame for it all ! If it hadn't been for you, I should——" And here she nearly choked. And how on

earth am I to blame ? What's my fault in all this ? I suppose it was also my fault when she nearly committed suicide that time ! What bunk ! And, even if it were true, is it any fault of mine if she's crazy about me ? I'm no more to blame for the cabbage nights than she ; both of us went there—that's all.

February 17th

Zin-Palna asked the pu-council to call a general meeting. At the meeting she said : " I ask those knowing anything of the origin of these letters, and of the truth of their contents, to tell the meeting about it. It is quite obvious that many of the pupils are greatly worried about it, and are unable to work properly."

No answer. I felt very bad about it. On the one hand, I was, like the others, tied by the oath I had made. On the other hand, the question had to be settled one way or another.

" Very well," said Zin-Palna, " I see that no one knows anything about it. If such is the case, let us forget about the whole business. I am sure the fault lies entirely with the author's rather too powerful imagination. For my part, I shall be deeply obliged if the author of these anonymous letters will

employ his imagination in some other direction, and stop interfering with the work at school. And I am also in favour of getting on with the theatrical work. *Hamlet* ought to be rehearsed every day. I hope the show will refresh our heads and clear up the atmosphere, which has become too heavy."

Most of the people laughed, but I felt worse than ever. The same feeling of shame that I had felt when lying to my father crept over me again. Zin-Palna trusts us and always helps us out, and we go on lying to her.

The performance of *Hamlet* has been fixed for February 20th. (Nikpetozh has agreed to this.)

The Unit is to be invited to the show. It's the one from the factory at which we are inscribed.

February 18th

The sex problem has begun to trouble me terribly, and I simply must find some solution to it. It is gone so far that at to-day's rehearsal I squeezed the girls into a corner in one of the crowded scenes. They had new dresses on, and had their hair differently done, and I didn't do it for fun. The girls kept on cursing me, and Nikpetozh said he would put

me out and put someone else in my place, even if it harmed the play. It's just as well that none of them realised that it wasn't just for fun. They all said that I had become more sensible lately, but that suddenly I had got wild again. But what if they knew ?

February 19th

It looks as if I shan't be able to speak to Sylva again. I hardly know how to write this down. Sylva and I had been good friends all the time, and I still feel the same way towards her ; yet to-day I couldn't help doing what I did. Sylva is at the head of the costume committee ; she has prepared nearly all the costumes herself ; none of the others have done much. Sylva always attends the rehearsals ; so she was also at the dress rehearsal to-day. In the phys lab she was sewing up a hole in the Laertes costume I was wearing when I said to her :

" Sylva, would you walk out with me ? I'm asking you this as a matter of principle."

" What do you mean by walking out ? We walk out together, don't we ? "

" No, not that way. But in the real sense."

She stopped sewing, and asked :

" Why, don't we walk in the real sense ? "

" You don't understand," I said, and

began to feel very awkward. "I mean like—husband and wife."

I thought she would get angry, but she didn't. She merely cast down her eyes and said: "Why, do you want to marry me? You're far too young for that; and so am I."

"But no, Sylva, you don't understand," I continued, and felt at that moment like taking to my heels. "I don't mean marriage; I mean would you—walk out with me—now—while we're still at school?"

"And how are you going to do it?"

"Well—supposing—I kiss you?"

She thought for a while, and then said:

"No, I don't think I can let you do that. But, even if I do allow you, what next?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" I screamed, and, giving a violent pull at the thread she was still holding in her hand, I ran out of the room.

February 22nd

Up till now I have been too busy investigating the letter business to describe the *Hamlet* show.

It went off splendidly. Serezhka Blinov roared like thunder and dashed about the stage like a balloon, knocking everything down on his way. At one point the king said

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to him, quite loudly : “ Go steady, you devil ! ” Vanya Palkin made a splendid ghost, too. He came in wrapped in a sheet and with his face all painted with chalk, and his voice seemed really creepy, especially when it came through the trap-door in the floor. Unfortunately, something went wrong with the trap-door and he had to come in from the back of the stage instead. Nikpetozh was much more nervous than anyone else. We had no prompter’s box, so he had to sit behind the stage and prompt from there. The fellows said afterwards that those sitting close to the stage heard two voices at the same time—one from the stage and one from behind it. I knocked Serezhka’s sword away, all the same ; for he can’t fence even yet ; and, though it isn’t in Shakespeare, no one noticed it. Black Zoya was splendid—by far the best of all. Many of the girls wept when they saw her.

February 25th

Black Zoya gave me a surprise to-day. She’s been very uppish ever since the play, when the audience shouted for her several times. She certainly seems to have changed a lot. She’s stopped wearing her black dress and has cheered up, and is altogether

changed from what she used to be. And she has stopped talking about corpses, although some of us still tease her about it. She took me into the passage and said :

“ I want to tell you a secret.”

“ What secret ? I don’t think I want to know any ! ”

“ But it’s a very important one. You know, I’m in love with you.”

“ Wha-a-at ? ”

“ Don’t say wh-a-at, and don’t get conceited over it, for no one is responsible for falling in love ; nature does it. And don’t imagine that I’ll do anything terrible. Only I’ve thought it over and decided I’d feel easier about it if I told you. But it doesn’t give you any claim on me.”

“ Go and have a drink of water,” I said, and went away.

February 26th

A queer business. The girls went out to tell secrets to-day, and I found out somehow that they were trying to revive the cabbage night business. And, what’s worse, Sylva is in with them. Ever since the day I asked her that question, which I had been anxious to find out as a matter of principle, we haven’t spoken to each other, and she seems to be

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avoiding me. When I heard of the secret-telling I went and consulted Vanya Palkin, and we decided to prepare a counter-attack.

February 27th

I am very pleased with myself. I spent nearly the whole of February working on my report on the Chinese events, and Nikpetozh has praised it very highly.

And I think I have found out who wrote the anonymous letters. It's Keshka Gorokhov, a lanky, sullen fellow in the second group. And this is why I think it's he. The only clue I've got is the letter sent to dad. I began by investigating everybody's inkpots. This is difficult, for they all put them away as soon as they've finished using them. But to-day I thought out a stunt. While the second group were working in the maths lab (Almakfish wasn't there at the time), I tore into the room and shouted : " Quick ! give me some ink for Almakfish ! " And I grabbed the first inkpot I could see—it was Keshka's, who sits close to the door, as I had already observed—and dashed away with it ; Keshka ran after me, shouting for his ink and saying he needed it, but I, not being a fool, ran quickly into the lecture-room, where I had an empty bottle all ready.

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I quickly poured into it some of Keshka's ink and then walked back and calmly handed him his inkpot. He looked at me suspiciously, but said nothing. Lately I have been watching him closely, and I've noticed how queer he looks every time I look at him. He's the only one from the second group who used to come to the cabbage nights. I compared the two kinds of ink, and found that they were both purple and very like each other. I must compare the two handwritings now, and then I'll have got it. Only that's more difficult, because the letter is written in printed characters.

March 3rd

After all kinds of attempts, I at last managed to get one of Gorokhov's copy-books, and I believe I can spot a certain likeness between the copy-book and the letter. So I looked for Keshka and asked him point-blank : " Keshka, did you write those letters to the parents ? " " Say that again, you dirty scoundrel ! " he shouted, and turned red. But I insisted : " Tell me what you know about it. Come on. " He clenched his fists and was ready to fight, but I put on a mysterious air and walked away.

Psychologically, he ought to come to me now and confess.

March 4th

I'm afraid I've put my foot in it badly. To-day I went to Nikpetozh about my January tasks, and when I opened my history book I saw a note inside it. When I unfolded it I nearly collapsed. "Kostya, for old friendship's sake I warn you that an attack is being prepared against you and Vanya Palkin because of the cabbage nights. *They* do not know. Beware." But what gave me such a shock was not so much the contents of the note as the writing. The writing, the printed characters, the ink, were all *exactly the same* as in the letter sent to dad. So it wasn't Keshka after all ! As if Keshka would "warn" me "for old friendship's sake" after yesterday's row ! I went up to Nikpetozh, and, instead of mentioning the work, I said : "Nikolay Petrovitch, am I right in trying to find out who wrote the anonymous letters ?" "How are you doing it ?" he asked. "First I watch, and then I draw my own conclusions." "And why are you doing it ?" "Because whoever wrote them is betraying his comrades." "But do you think, Riabtsov," he said, "that it is

really nice to act as a volunteer detective among your own comrades? The matter was to be forgotten ; so why try to bring it up again ? ” I nearly said it *was* being brought up again, but stopped myself in time.

All the same, I think I'll stop my search ; I nearly got into a stupid mess over Keshka Gorokhov.

But who could have written them—first the letters, and now this note to me ?

March 7th

I read Artsibashev's *Sanin* and couldn't sleep all night ; and again—— Now my head aches terribly, and I don't know what to do. It would be awkward to ask Nikpetozh. He might say he had told us all about it in natural history, and I couldn't possibly tell him *everything*.

The worst of it is that it affects my mental capacities. To-day I went so far as to look up the passage in my diary about the aim of life and to cross out the remark—"What bunk !"—that I had put after the bit about the "satisfaction of one's needs." Is it worth while living and suffering ? And when such thoughts come to my mind I ask myself : "Are they worthy of a young Communist, of one marching in the vanguard of the rising

generation?" Though I am not in the A.C.Y. yet, but am still only a candidate, I am a convinced Communist all the same. It seems to me I have done many bad things. Taking part in these cabbage nights, and all the lies that followed, and now especially, this question of sex. The bourgeois and the intellectuals used to solve the problem exactly the way I do it. Yet I'm neither a bourgeois nor an intellectual, so I'll have to solve it in some other manner.

March 12th

I'm just back from a meeting of the Unit at the factory club. Although it is late, I must write it all down, in case I forget it. About 150 members attended, thirty of whom belonged to our school ; the rest were factory workers. At first it was no different from our meetings—even duller. They read a report of the district committee and then the office report. The factory lads were so bored that they chattered all the time, and the chairman had to call for order every other minute. But they all shut up as soon as current business began.

They've got a girl there called Gulkina, who has applied to the Unit for money to

have an abortion done. (I must ask Serezhka Blinov what sort of thing this is. It seems to be some way of turning a man into a woman or the other way round, or some new medical invention with which a woman stops bearing children.)

When this application was read out, a frightful rumpus was raised in the hall ; some of them shouted that she should be given the money, and others shouted that she shouldn't. Then Ivanov, a serious-looking fellow, the secretary of the Unit, got up and said : " What's the use of making a fuss, I ask you, when the members' subscriptions are always three months overdue, and I've got to fight for them every time ? Where do you expect to get the money from ? In any case, this isn't a bank, is it ? "

Then a very savage-looking female got up ; she had been speaking all evening on every question, and always seemed to be in a temper.

" What'll happen if we have to pay for every one of them ? Who will bear children ? Will Pushkin do it ? I make this concrete proposal : give her a book about abortions and let her read it."

But some of the others shouted :

" Pay her the money."

Only I'm sure they did this for fun,

because the secretary had just told them that there were no funds.

Then another girl jumped up and said :

“ No, it can't be done. There's no money to give, and someone's got to do the child-bearing, and, above all, she might die from an abortion. Or else it might do her a lot of harm. She might be crippled for life. Abortions are very seldom a success.” And then Ivanov got up again and said :

“ As I've already told you, the Unit has no money to give away. All the same, comrades, to do nothing for her is not a solution. Don't you remember that Gulkina sent in another application some time ago in which she stated that she had nowhere to live, and that a room, or at least the corner of a room, ought to be given her ? We must, therefore, inquire into Gulkina's position, especially as she's staying at the other end of the town. Only there must be no abortion—let her give birth to the child—but we shan't just turn our backs on her ; we must help her to get a room or something.”

We then appointed a committee to investigate how the Gulkina woman was really situated, and then we sang the “ Young Guard ” and the meeting closed.

On my way home I thought how I had imagined a different life at the factory when

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watching it all burning and shining at night ; but now I find that the fellows there are also fond of fun, and that the questions raised at the Unit aren't as difficult as I had feared.

I felt cheerful in a curious way. I realised I wasn't all alone, and that I could be of use to my class. But at the same time sex questions came into my head again, only from a different angle. The Gulkina business played an important part. Vanka Petukhov had said it was all very simple ; but it doesn't seem to be so simple as all that if a Unit of 150 people get stuck over it. It seems to me now as though there was a good deal of suffering connected with the whole problem. This abortion, for instance—why should a girl remain a cripple for life ?

It is a pity I didn't pay more attention to the factory Unit before ; I might have learned a lot. I must go and ask Ivanov about a certain problem.

March 17th

I have talked to Serezhka Blinov about abortions, and he explained it all in detail. I don't believe they can be done without injuring a woman for life. It must be best for

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them to bear strong and healthy kids—to replace the old ones.

March 19th

I have been wondering about Vanya Palkin's absence from school. I thought it was due to the cabbage nights ; but there seems to be a different reason. I shan't interfere this time ; Nikpetozh was probably right in saying it wasn't very nice to spy on one's comrades. Sylva and I have stopped speaking to each other, and as I must be friendly with someone, I see much more of Black Zoya.

She said she had hated me before, because I used to tease her, but that she had changed since the show when she saw me knock the sword out of Serezhka's hand.

Work is going on just as usual. The headaches and the other things have stopped. I rub myself with snow every morning.

March 21st

Sylva came up to me to-day and said : " Kostya Riabtsov, I must tell you I've entirely changed my mind about you. I used to think you were a real communist youth, and faithful to the ideology. Now I see you

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were simply pretending, and that your ideology had nothing to do with the A.C.Y."

"I never pretended anything," I said, "and what do you know about my real ideology?"

"I know perfectly well. I also know what sort of things you and Vanya Palkin used to arrange."

"I didn't arrange anything, but merely went there. So it's you who wrote the anonymous letters?"

"And you dare say that to me, you idiot!" said Sylva, and looked straight into my eyes. "That's a nice one." She turned round, ready to go.

"Wait a moment," I said. "Are you quite sure, Sylva, I haven't got the A.C.Y. ideology?"

"I don't want to talk to you," she said, and went off.

I was terribly hurt, but couldn't do anything, for in a way she was right. But I never *pretended*. And I shall *prove* it to her.

March 23rd

There was a big row to-day, but I'm still not quite sure what it was all about.

Lina's father, a servant of the Cult (a

priest), came to school to-day. He asked for Zin-Palna, and talked to her for a long time. He looked red and excited, and seemed to be explaining something to her, while she listened to him looking very worried and confused.

As all this took place in the teachers' room, we couldn't make out what was being said. Then Zin-Palna, looking terribly excited, walked away with Lina's father, and did not return until after study.

All the skworkers were called for, and we were sent home.

March 25th

It'll be very hard for me to write this down ; but I must do it all the same.

As soon as I got to school this morning Zin-Palna called me into her office. "Will you be quite candid with me, Riabtsov?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, and looked straight at her. (I'm tired of telling lies.)

"Tell me, did you go to those meetings which Vanya Palkin used to arrange?"

"I did."

"Did you realise that you not only interfered with the work of the school, but that you betrayed the school itself?"

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"I give you a Communist's vow of honour, I didn't realise it."

"What did you think of the relation between the school and those—phenomena?"

"I thought—there was no connection, seeing that the meetings all took place outside the school."

"Well, even if that was so, do you know what's happened to Lina?"

"I know she has stopped coming to school, and I've wondered if it had any connection with—the cabbage nights, but I give you my word of honour I know nothing definitely."

"Lina," said Zin-Palna, "will have to leave school, and she's going to the Ukraine. I hope you will keep this conversation to yourself, just as you kept the cabbage meetings dark."

"Of course I'll keep quiet, Zinaida Pavlovna," I said, and a lump came to my throat. "Only—I'm sure the girls know more about it than I do."

"I've already talked to them. You can go now."

"Just a minute, Zinaida Pavlovna—one more question. Is there any connection—what's happened to Lina—has it any connection with the—sex question?"

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“Yes, it has,” said Zinaida Pavlovna firmly. “You may go.”

I went, only not to school, but home.

(After this entry a few pages are smeared over with ink.)

April 5th

I got a letter from Lina yesterday.

“Kostya Riabtsov ! I don’t blame you now for anything, and I realise my own fault. Kostya Riabtsov, by the time this letter reaches you I shall be so far away from you that I won’t be ashamed. I am beginning a new life, and all the old and gloomy past remains behind and is erased from my life for ever. It was your fault if I fell in with V. P., or, rather, I did it because I was angry with you, and hurt by your rough treatment, and ashamed of our vulgar suicide. But now it’s all, all over, and I feel so easy ! I advise you to change your way of living, for, if you go on, you’ll find nothing but impenetrable gloom. All that’s beautiful both in your life and in mine still lies in the future.

“You may as well know now that it was I who wrote the letters to all the parents ;

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I was suffering, and wanted to stop it *all*, only I did not know how to do it ; only after I had written the letters I felt even more miserable. And only now that I've fled from the gloom into freedom and sunshine have I realised how stupid I have been.

"You shouldn't have talked to Sylva about *that*—you remember that day, in the dressing-room. Sylva isn't that kind. During my most miserable hours she took care of me like a sister, even though I had been unfriendly to her before.

"Good-bye, Kostya Riabtsov ! Be happy and make peace with Sylva. And forget me for ever, for ever !"

It's rotten when you don't know how to live.

April 10th

To-day I met Vanya Palkin in the street, dressed in an elegant new coat, carrying a walking-stick and with a cigarette in his mouth.

"Hullo, Kostya," he said. "Well, still getting pickled in the old kitchen ?"

"Yes, I'm still at school !"

"What's the good ? I tell you—come along

to my place to-morrow. We'll have some girls—not the sour school kind, but really nice girls. And plenty of fresh drink. You just come along."

"All right," I said, "I'll come. Any of our crowd?"

"Why, of course. All good friends. So you'll come?"

"All right. Good-bye."

April 12th

This is what happened. I got to his house at the Ivan Park at the usual hour. About twelve people were there already, sitting round the table; Vanya's parents were out, as they always were on cabbage nights. Now I can tell about these cabbage nights. The cabbage nights meant drinking and carrying on with girls, but not the way it's done in the street, but with cuddling and kissing. A bowl of cabbage with oil—everyone's favourite dish—used to stand on the table and plenty of hooch to make everyone drunk. Personally, I never saw anything beyond pawing and cuddling, but now it looks as if some worse things had also happened.

There they were, sitting round the table—among them, three fellows from our school

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(I shan't mention their names) and several girls with painted faces ; there were no schoolgirls in the crowd. They were half drunk already when I went in, and they all shouted :

"Hullo, here's Kostya ! Give him a drink ! There's going to be some fun to-night."

"Yes, there will be some fun," I said, and dashed the tumbler against the floor, "because I've realised what is fun and what isn't. You, my dear schoolmates, will now go out with me and will never show your faces here again, because what you are doing now, and what I used to do, is abominable. Only, before we go, let me say a few words to the other citizens present."

"Why, you've absolutely lost your wits," shouted Vanya Palkin.

"No, I haven't lost them ; I've found them again." I replied. "Do you realise, Vanya, how much trouble you've caused, with your cabbage nights ? Have you realised that one girl's life—you know her name—has been ruined with them ? Do you realise that you've nearly ruined the school ? No, Vanya, drink and carry on with your own friends as much as you like, but leave our school alone !"

"You miserable skunk !" Vanya shouted,

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and got ready to fight. So I threw a bottle at him, and hopped out of the house with the other fellows.

April 15th

I'm so tired that my hands tremble. I've so much work to do before the summer vacation, because, with all the rows I had in winter, I'm behind-hand in all my subjects ; and if I don't pass them all now, all my summer will be spoilt. Then they are saying that there will be a summer school. I thought it was only for the first grade, but now it appears that they've introduced it in the second grade too. So we'll have more excursions.

Serezhka Blinov says that in summer the skworkers will demonstrate their entire inefficiency ; in the winter, he said, they manage to get along somehow, but in the summer they'll get badly stung.

I've a new friend, called Yushka Gromov. He has been in our group all along, only I never bothered about him. He's a very cheery fellow, and never ponders over any questions. I told him a few things about myself, and about the cabbage nights ; but he said it was all rubbish, and I should forget about it.

April 17th

A strange thing happened at school. I was passing the maths lab when I heard someone screaming with laughter. I went in, and I saw Ninka Fradkin and Stasya Velipolsky facing each other and laughing. I thought it funny, too, and began laughing, and asked them what was wrong. But they laughed all the louder, and suddenly I noticed something gurgling in Stasya's throat. Then the gurgling seemed to turn into a choking, and I got quite scared, and ran off in search of the skworker on duty—it happened to be Almakfish—and brought him back. The girls were sobbing for all they were worth by this time. Almakfish said they had hysterics, and I ran for water and a towel, and both the girls were soon put right. The fellows asked me afterwards whether I'd like to cure them, as I'd already cured Zoya Travnikova of her fainting fits, but I said it wasn't my business any more, and that the present pu-council could attend to it.

I've plenty to do in any case. A month ago the provincial administration connected our school with the S.L.D.M. (Social and Legal Defence of Minors), so that we might help in solving the stray problem. As a result of the Cheekin incident—when he stole the six milliards—and my visit to the tumbledown

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basement where I saw him afterwards, I was appointed to represent the school at the S.L.D.M. So now I have to go there, and I have a lot to do with the strays, but usually without any result. It seems that grown-up people, after working with them for three months, have to go to mental homes.

I think the problem could be easily solved. Why not organise a few parties of young fellows like myself who could arrange street fights with the strays at every street corner, and, after the fight, smoke cigarettes with them and treat them to vodka ; they would be quite glad to get to know us, and then we could teach them to read. Some of us could, like Vanka Petukhov, tell them stories, and there would be no need for any nervous breakdowns. There's only one objection to this. We wouldn't have any time to do our own work ; we would be kept so busy. I explained my plan to the S.L.D.M. secretary, but she only laughed. I hate people laughing at me. It would be better if she thought it over instead of laughing at me. At any rate, their present methods aren't worth a damn, and I don't think I'll work any more for the S.L.D.M.

Aleshka Cheekin's father has been run over by a lorry, and Zin-Palna is going to

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bring Aleshka up herself. The whole school says she's doing a very good thing.

April 20th

There was a meeting of the pu-council about the girls' hysterics, and I was called in as a witness.

The " Militia " was there also. The school militia was started a month ago, in order to relieve the pu-council of its administrative duties. There are two " militonaries," and they stroll around the whole school looking just like the French policemen at the cinema—just as idiotic-looking. I explained what I had seen and went away. I don't think they made any decision.

We've had a few excursions to the textile factory with whose Unit we are connected.

In every other respect neither our A.C.Y. fraction nor the Unit seem to have influenced our life at school to any extent, and surely that is wrong.

April 22nd

To-day there was a terrible fight in the lecture-room, and Volodka Schmerz got his face all bloody ; he gets hit so often that we call him the " Invincible " ; the militonaries,

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of course, could do nothing, and had to call in the skworker who was on duty.

The general meeting discussed a new self-government plan. According to this plan a new pu-council is to be appointed in future once every three months instead of once a month ; in this way the councillors will have time to become more familiar with their work ; at present they get replaced before they actually get used to it. Serezhka Blinov was against the new plan, and said that the longer a council existed the more powerful it became ; but that in any case it didn't matter, for if one appointed a pu-council even for a year it would still be ruled by the skworkers and still have no authority of its own. To this Zin-Palna replied, " I see Blinov is still at the old game. Surely he doesn't want to split up the school into two parties again, especially at the end of term, when so many tasks have still to be completed. I'm sure he's simply affected by the spring weather ! "

Serezhka said the spring weather had nothing to do with it, and that he had merely wanted to express his opinion. And, as everybody was very fussy, Blinov got quite excited and began to shout. Then Almakfish suddenly jumped up and shouted that the school had had enough of Blinov, and then a

real row began. In the end Zin-Palna simply had to close the meeting.

Later, in the passage, Serezhka announced he would show the skworkers, on principle, that he was a revolutionary first and a scholar only second, and he went on like that for quite a while.

April 23rd

A new number of the *EX* has come out, in which the helplessness of self-government is demonstrated. A large crowd stood round the paper, and Serezhka Blinov was there making a fiery speech. Everybody agreed with him that a form of government without authority was no government at all, and that it would be better to give it up altogether. But they also decided to adjourn matters until the tasks were all finished. Then Serezhka said that the skworkers did not fulfil their real purpose, and that the school would not enter the revolutionary road and we wouldn't work and live comfortably until they were done away with. Many of us don't agree with this. For example, I know from experience that people like Zin-Palna and Nikpetozh are just right for their jobs; of course, I have some objections to Elnikitka, and even to

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Almakfish, but I shouldn't say they were useless. But Serezhka says that, if a fight is to be put up, it ought to be put up against the whole lot of them.

After that Nikpetozh and I walked about the gymnastics hall and talked. He himself had called me in, and, among other things, asked me why I had stopped being friends with Sylva. I said I had stopped it after the Lina business, chiefly because Sylva had suspected me of something or other (although my only fault had been to go to the cabbage nights) and had said that I lacked the A.C.Y. ideology.

"She's all right," I said, "only she's got a terrible temper. Why do you think she's so wonderful?"

"She's a serious girl," he said, "and one who has a high standard both for herself and for others; but if she becomes attached to anyone she will stand by him to the end." And then Nikpetozh, for no apparent reason, suddenly asked: "Tell me, Riabtsov, do you think I'm a happy man or not?"

"Of course you're a happy man."

"I'm afraid you're a poor observer, Riabtsov."

"Well, Nikolay Petrovitch, I look at it this way. I think a man is unhappy when he's quite alone, and when he has to go in for

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social activities merely to forget his loneliness, and a man is unhappy if he has no one to consult."

"Are you unhappy, Riabtsov?"

"Oh, no," I said, "you can't pump me!"

We both laughed, and I went away.

Everybody likes and appreciates Nikpetozh; I wonder why he should be unhappy? Only Sereshka Blinov is against him, but, then, he's against all the skworkers.

April 26th

I went to the S.L.D.M. to-day, and, as the secretary was out, I started looking through some papers on the desk to pass the time away. A long sheet of paper, covered by an uncouth handwriting, caught my eye, and I glanced through it rapidly; it amazed me, and, as there was no one to ask about it, I decided to make a copy of it on the typewriter. Of course, I had to do it in a great hurry, in case the secretary came in. I had just finished and slipped the paper back into the file when the secretary walked in; the file still lay open on the desk. The secretary looked suspiciously at me. "What were you doing here without me?" she said. "Nothing. I was just waiting for you," "And why is the file open?" "Oh, I was

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simply glancing at it." "Let me ask you once and for all not to touch any files containing confidential papers." "If they're confidential papers, why do you leave them lying about the desk?"

The secretary got very cross and said: "You don't seem to be taking the work in the right spirit, Comrade Riahtsov, and, on the whole——"

"On the whole," I said, "there's nothing for me to do here. When you are told what to do about the strays, you merely treat it as a joke."

When I got home I read over the copy. What amazes me most is that grown-up men seem to be troubled by sex problems also, and that they can be punished for what they do. I must ask Nikpetozh about it; it is painful to read such letters and not to know what is true and what isn't; and there's nothing about it in books.

April 28th

To-day we were being examined in maths, and Stasya Velipolsky, of the fourth group, got ploughed. When she came out of the lab she suddenly stopped and began to laugh. There were several other girls waiting to be examined, and they tried to comfort Stasya,

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and gave her water to drink, and then suddenly the whole lot of them went off laughing and sobbing. Stasya fell down and kicked her legs about, and one by one the others followed suit. The skworkers came rushing in, and when the girls had calmed down a bit I heard Zin-Palna say something to Almakfish about "mass hysterics," and "measures must be taken." The whole business lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour.

After that I showed Nikpetozh the copy I had pinched at the S.L.D.M. He looked very embarrassed, and advised me to destroy it and to think of my work ; but, seeing that I insisted, he told me it was all sexual perversion, and that the Soviet Government did its best to fight against it, and that it encouraged athletics and arranged lectures and generally tried to improve the people's mentality. All this hardly answered my question.

It was the first time I had ever seen Nikpetozh look embarrassed.

April 30th

After the phys exam there was another case of general hysterics among the girls. And to-day the *EX* came out with this notice :

“THE HYSTERICAL INSTITUTE

“We have pleasure in informing our readers that a new department has been opened at our school under the name of the Hysterical Institute (not to be confused with the Historical Institute). On completion of studies the successful candidates are awarded the diploma of a well-bred young lady. Among the subjects taught at the institute we may mention dancing, flirting, and the numerous forms of hysterics, from mouse-like squeaking to thunderous laughter (inclusive). The most successful candidates so far are the following :

“N. F., S. V., L. D., and K. R.

“With a view to facilitating the studies in the above-named institute, the *EX* takes the liberty to suggest the introduction of the following new measures :

“(1) A hundred-gallon tank of valerian drops to be placed in the lecture-hall.

“(2) An iron effigy labelled, “The Statue of Sorrow,” to be erected in the drill-hall. Without interfering with the work of their schoolmates, all those desirous of weeping can do so on the statue’s bosom.

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“ This effigy must be made of iron, lest the tears should wash it away.

“ The *EX* trusts that these measures will greatly help the progress of the Hysterical Institute.”

We were greatly amused at this, but the girls got terribly angry, and tore the *EX* down just as Zin-Palna had started reading it. She stamped her foot and shouted : “ I won’t have anyone interfere with the freedom of the Press at school. Put the paper back at once ! ”

So the girls rushed away and returned with drawing-pins, and fastened the paper to the wall, while we stood aside and laughed till our bellies ached.

After that I accidentally found out something. I picked up a crumpled sheet of paper near the lecture-hall. It was the account of the Hysterical Institute, and was written in Zin-Palna’s own handwriting ! And on the back of it—in the same writing—were the words “ *To the Editor.*” It’s disgusting that no one should have told me about it before. Altogether, there are too many things that I only find out for myself. There seem to be more and more of them, and I’ve simply no one to consult. I’ve stopped talking to Sylva, Serezhka isn’t what he used to be, and

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Nikpetozh is grown-up and wouldn't understand me, and there is nobody else.

I've one more task to finish, and then I've got this diary to write up. It has become like a good friend to whom I can tell everything.

May 10th

Hurrah ! I'm through with nearly all the work, and Nikpetozh congratulated me to-day and said I may now consider myself as a fourth-grouper. Nearly all the people in our group have passed, including Black Zoya and Sylva. Yushka Gromov got stuck ; he hasn't done any sociology or maths since January ; but he says it's all nonsense, and he doesn't care whether he's in the third or fourth group. He won't finish school, anyway, as he means to enter the cavalry school. He says he likes the red breeches they wear there.

I think it's all bunk whether one wears breeches or only knickers.

I showed Yushka the S.L.D.M. paper, and he said there was nothing surprising in it—that all men did it, and that it was all nonsense.

He wouldn't have said that if his attitude to the sex problem were the same as mine.

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May 15th

Zin-Palna declared to-day that only those who were staying in town during summer could join the summer school ; the others could go out of town on their own. She also said she was to be in charge of the summer school and would do without a holiday.

The summer work is to consist of : (1) Investigating a village not far from the town ; (2) Archæological work in conjunction with the district museum ; (3) Natural history excursions ; (4) Sociological excursions to museums and ancient estates.

The skworkers will direct the studies, each in his own field.

The summer school is to open on June 1st, after the distribution of leaving certificates and the promotions from one group to another.

May 20th

I wore out my shoes at football, and now, to save dad the additional expense, I spend every evening mending them, and so I've no time to write. The shoemaker says I'll have to buy a pair of new ones all the same.

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May 31st

Yushka Gromov has a sister called Maria, and, although she's quite grown-up, she won't leave the young boys alone. She reeks of scent like a barrel, and her nose is quite white, but Yushka says it's powder and that it's really blue. I must find out if that's true. Their father trades in cat-furs. He buys and skins the cats, and sells the fur as squirrel. Dad, who knows old Gromov, says that cat-skin isn't much good, and that it moults. Maria always seems to be sorry for me, and calls me "little orphan," and gives me tea and jam ; and Yushka has started calling me "orphan " also. It's a bit annoying, but in a way I rather like it.

The A.C.Y. is closing down for the summer, and I'm sorry, although I seldom attended the meetings at the factory club. Besides, Serezhka Blinov is going to Tambov, and Zoya is going to Leningrad for the summer to stay with relations. Sometimes I feel as if I were wandering alone on the naked earth, without a soul around, and I feel sick at heart.

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GENERAL COPY-BOOK

June 3rd

To-day Zin-Palna explained about the summer school tasks. We shall have to examine the Golovkino village, five miles out of town, from every standpoint, or, as she said, by the complex method. We'll have to get acquainted with the peasants, and we mustn't turn up our noses at them just because we happen to be townspeople. We'll also have to investigate their ways of living, measure their village geometrically, give them whatever help and information they may require, and generally serve as a link between them and the town ; that's number one.

Then we are to listen to the songs, stories, legends, and superstitions of the peasants, and write them all down (and also make drawings of peasants' clothes—although this has more to do with their "mode of living"). To show us what is meant by popular epic poetry, Zin-Palna read some extracts from a Finnish poem called the *Kalevala*. There was a collector of folklore called Runeberg who walked through the whole of Finland and made a big collection of stories,

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and later there was a poet called Lenrof who turned them into a poem.

All that wasn't, like Shakespeare, three hundred years ago, but last century—that is not more than a hundred years ago. Perhaps Runeberg had some use for all those things ; but I don't see why we should trouble about them. As if anyone could be interested in such wild superstitions as wood-ghosts and devils ! I don't think even the peasants have much faith in all that bunk. Besides, there won't be much in the way of comparison, for in Finnish folklore there are giants. Three of them got together in order to find the Sampo treasure, and while they were searching for it they had to fight with every kind of evil power. Now, how can you compare this with old woman Yaga riding on a broom ? All our witches and devils are ugly and terrible. And the Finns believe that you mustn't kill frogs, because frogs once were people, and that when teeth fall out they ought to be given to spiders. All this merely shows the ignorance of the people, and I don't see anything in it worth writing down.

They would be better to get on with the co-operation and electrification of the villages, and turn them Socialist. But Zin-Palna said that everything ought to be

recorded, especially as all this folklore will disappear when the village is electrified, and then there will be no way at all of digging it up.

I don't think it'll be worth digging for, anyway.

I explained all this to Zin-Palna, but she said I had no love for my native language, the root of all our culture. I couldn't say anything in reply, and I had to take down all about Ukko the Thunderer, and Peyva the Sun, and Tjerems with the Hammer, the slayer of all the magicians. (Oh, my hat !)

Besides, we have to dig up all kinds of mounds for the district museum. Zin-Palna told us that there was an old subterranean camp eight miles away, consisting of eight sepulchres. The people at the district museum believe that ancient warriors are buried there, along with all their armour, horses, and wives. All this will have to be dug up and sent to the museum. That'll be fun ; especially the armour. We'll dig it up and have a battle right there, near the graves. Only I'm afraid we won't manage it all, as the other skworkers will also have some tasks for us.

Nikpetozh is unwell, and has taken two months' leave. Before leaving he spent a

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long time talking to Sylva ; I'm very offended he didn't speak to me, and now I have no one to talk to at all.

June 7th

Something happened after Elnikitka's nat-history meeting which greatly excited me. As I was leaving the lab I saw Volodka Schmerz hitting Sylva on the back. I noticed that Sylva was trying to shake him off, and I meant to walk past them when Sylva shouted in a serious tone : " Kostya Riabtsov, won't you stick up for me ? " I meant to go on, but Sylva suddenly yelled desperately, " Vladlen, help me ! " Volodka Schmerz burst out laughing and stopped fighting, and asked :

" What's Vladlen ? "

Here I turned round and gave him a Red Army ration, so that he fell over, but he got up and threw himself at me. I gave him another hand grenade which sent him tumbling out of the door, from where he shook his fist at me and disappeared. Then Sylva said, " I know all about it now, and I'm sorry. Forgive me."

" You knew it all before," I said, " and I have nothing to forgive you for."

" No, no," said she. " I have just heard

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it all from Nikolay Petrovitch ; let us be friends again, as before."

"The same friendship is impossible," I said in a dry tone, and went out, and I think she cried.

June 9th

Yesterday we went to Golovkino for the first time. The peasants were busy working at their allotments, where they seem to grow chiefly vegetables. As I was told to investigate their manner of living, I walked up to a peasant woman planting potatoes and said to her :

"Let me help you, auntie."

"And who are you ? "

"We've come on an excursion from town."

"Schoolboys, I suppose."

"That's right."

"Last summer some schoolboys went to Petrushkovo to measure the ground, and stole Aunt Arina's little hamper full of linen."

"We shan't pinch anything."

"I don't know what kind you are. You'd better run along and not bother me."

"Do you believe in devils, auntie ? "

Here she got up and rubbed the earth

off her hands, and yelled for all she was worth :

“ Pe-ter ! Pe-ter ! ”

And then a little peasant came out from behind a fence, carrying a pitchfork, and walked straight towards us. And the woman said : “ Here’s some fellow from the school crowd, and he talks about devils.”

Here I pulled myself together and said : “ Not about devils at all, but if you like I can tell you about electrification and wireless and help you in all kinds of ways.”

“ Oh, I see, it’s the link,”¹ said the little peasant. “ Well, well, we don’t mind, if it’s any good. Only, my lad, you had better come along on Sunday ; our folks will have more time to waste then.”

So I left that farm without learning anything, and walked along the allotments at the back of the farms, where the women and kids were busy digging, when a shaggy dog jumped suddenly at me, barking furiously. I bent down, pretending to pick up a stone, as I always do if a dog attacks me, but the beast wouldn’t stop barking, and some other dogs came dashing out of the farms towards me. I had been told that the best way to get rid of a savage dog

¹The official term for a *rapprochement* between industry and agriculture.

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was to make water on it, but as there was a whole crowd of them, I started turning round and round, making water in every direction and aiming at the dogs. "What's all this?" I suddenly heard a voice behind me. "More of the *link*?" And, as I turned round, I saw the same little peasant approaching me with his pitchfork. He chased the dogs away, and I walked on. But, after I had passed two farms, the dogs attacked me again, and one of them snapped at my trouser-leg. Then I got savage, and tore a post out of the fence to protect myself. "Chuck the stick, I tell you, or they'll tear you to pieces!"

I threw down the post; and a peasant came up and asked:

"What do you want?"

"I've come to inspect your village."

"There's nothing to inspect in our back yards. Always coming and inspecting. Why did you break that fence? You didn't put it up, did you? So what business had you to break it?"

And a woman popped up from behind a hedge and shouted:

"Get out, you villain! Always hanging round, and we've got to keep looking out all the time in case you pinch anything."

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They've pinched Aunt Arina's hamper already out there at Petrushkovo. . . . Vanka ! Vanka !" she suddenly yelled like mad, "run along quick and count the goslings."

It took me all my time to get on to the main road. The other fellows had done no better, and two of them, who had tried to measure the plots, nearly got beaten with their own rulers.

June 10th

I fear the winter business is starting again ; only this time it isn't my fault. Besides, I am more conscious of it now owing to the Lina incident, and also owing to the paper I pinched at the S.L.D.M., where it said that people were punished for certain things. The worst of it is that Nikpetozh has gone on leave, and, as I can't trust Yushka Gromov in these matters, I've no one else to consult, and am left entirely to myself. It's been going on for a few days now. Yushka's sister Maria has thought of acting a play—*The Proposal*, by Chekhov. I am to act the young man and Maria the bride. The play is old-fashioned and rather stupid, and all about landowners ; all the same I agreed to take part, as I want to see

what kind of actor I am. In the play I have to kiss Maria. At the rehearsal, when I put my paws round her and kissed her she said :

“ Oh, gosh, you’ve slobbered all over me. Don’t you know how to kiss ? ”

There were five or six people there, and they all laughed, and Yushka cried, “ He’s blushing, he’s blushing ! ” I got furious, and said I wouldn’t act in the play and would go home at once, but they all crowded round me and begged me to stay, and Yushka took me aside and said : “ Oh, you bloody little fool ! Still using your fist, are you ? Don’t you see Maria is trying to get round you ? ” I didn’t understand at first what he meant, but Maria came rushing along and pushed Yushka aside, and whispered to me : “ You are a funny kid, Kostya ! But never mind that ; I’m going to teach you. Would you like me to ? Come to our garden to-night.” There’s a little garden at the back of their house. I thought it over and stayed on, seeing I had nothing else to do.

In the evening I went to their garden, and Maria was there with a transparent blouse and a short skirt on. She quickly put her arms around me and said : “ Now, be sure and don’t slobber ; close your lips tight and press them to my cheek.” But I purposely kissed her nose instead of her cheek, and

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she whispered, "Not there, you fool!"—but, all the same, I noticed a smudge on her nose. Then she showed me how to kiss on the mouth, but it wasn't very nice, for her teeth are brown, and she smells, not only of perfume, but also of tobacco. She always smokes just one fag after another. Then she led me into a very dark corner and made me sit on a bench, and then sat down on my knees. But I suddenly felt a strong doggy smell and said: "What's this filthy stink? Let's get out of here."

But she pawed me, and whispered in my ear: "Never mind that. It's the cat-skins father has hung up to dry."

Never mind, indeed, when the place stank like a sewer, or even worse! With an effort I pushed her aside and went home. But she didn't seem to mind. Since then I've been there several times, and we've kissed like little kids. Nothing nice in it. But it would hardly count at all if it wasn't for the other things that always happen afterwards. I'm very worried about it, especially when I remember the S.L.D.M. paper.

June 15th

Aleshka Cheekin is staying with Zin-Palna now, and has completely changed. Seeing he

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spent all that time with the strays, he is badly behind with his work, and will have to remain for another year in the third group. He's very thin and pale, and keeps silent all the time. Zin-Palna has managed to get relief for his mother from the Agri Department, and the old woman went to Zin-Palna and wanted to go on her knees before her, which annoyed Zin-Palna terribly. I tried to talk to Aleshka several times, but he says very little nowadays and only mumbles to himself.

June 20th

The day before yesterday we all went on an excursion with Elnikitka. It was meant to be a nat-history excursion, only we got on to sociology as well, which Elnikitka knows nothing about. Nearly the whole of the third (now fourth) group took part in it, and one or two of the second group also.

Volodka Schmerz and Ninka Fradkin stood in the passage the whole way, and all the fellows kept going past them pretending to go to the lavatory ; no sooner was one out than another would go in. Of course, Volodka was furious, but it serves him right for hanging round one girl after another like a comic man on the films. Ninka spat

like a cat at us, which was just what we wanted. Then Elnikitka told us to sing, because people sing when they go excursions. We asked her what to sing, and she said, "Descend upon us, silent night." So we started howling that idiotic song, and the conductor came along and, looking at us suspiciously, said: "I thought that the brakes must have given way." It was great fun travelling.

When we arrived at Solnechnoye, Elnikitka at once began to explain to the girls about nat-history, while we played football. This went on until some of the fellows caught an adder. Although everybody knows that an adder is harmless, it caused some trouble in the end. We took it to Elnikitka, and asked her, for fun: "Elena Nikitichna, what kind of snake is this?"

"It's an adder," she said, "a cousin of the African boa-constrictor."

"Does it bite?"

"Yes, but its sting is harmless."

Then Yushka Gromov, who was holding the adder in his hand, went up to Elnikitka and said: "Elena Nikitichna, won't you take it in your hand?"

"What for?" said she.

"Oh, just to show that it won't harm you," said Yushka, pushing the adder at her, all

twisting and wriggling as though it were being roasted.

Elnikitka and all the girls screamed like mad. "Throw it away at once," she shouted, "and don't dare come near me."

Yushka let it go, only he didn't drop it on the ground, but threw it straight at Ninka Fra in. She jerked her head back and squealed, while we all dashed away. Elnikitka said she'd report us to the general meeting. Oh, well, let her ; she has something or other to report every day, so that now people have stopped listening to her. You can never do anything funny or amusing in front of her, and whenever she's there the girls put on such miserably wretched expressions that you hate to look at them.

We went to the estate where the Agri. Dept. runs a dairy farm. The main building and dependencies are now used as a museum for demonstration purposes, and many excursion parties come here to see how the landowners, aristocrats, and bourgeois used to live in the old days.

Of course, we also wanted to see all this, but Elnikitka said :

"The object of this excursion is nat-history, and we must not let ourselves be distracted with other things. Let us go and see the dairy farm ; I'll explain everything to

you that's of interest." Now, what interest can there be in looking at cows and bulls? There might be some if we were going in for dairy farming, but not otherwise, and so the fellows refused to go, and went on arguing till a fellow in a brown jacket—he wasn't very old, but looked kind of dark and faded—came out through the glass door and said: "By the way, wouldn't you like to inspect the palace?" Then Elnikitka asked: "Are you the manager?" "Yes," said the man in the jacket, "I'm the chief here." And his voice had a grating sound, like a broken gramophone, and something bubbled in his throat as he spoke.

"Will you explain everything to us?" said Elnikitka.

"To the last pin," said the manager, and staggered.

"In that case we may as well go in," said Elnikitka peevishly.

She couldn't have explained anything herself, and that's why she didn't want to go in before.

The manager then took us through the rooms. "Here," he said, "the owner of this place, His Excellency Mr. Urusov, used to dine; and in this room His Excellency used to have tea. And here His Excellency used to have his after-dinner nap. And here——"

But even Elnikitka couldn't stand it any longer.

"What's all this *excellency* ? " she said. "You are speaking to Soviet children." (Children ! I like that !) "And they don't know any such words. Please be a little simpler, citizen manager."

"All-right (hic !)," said the manager. "Only we've been instructed (hic !) to preserve the l-local c-colour. Please notice the painting on these walls ; it's drawn after the fashion of a theatre. And this table here is made of severian¹ glass. Please don't touch anything. Some people come here and touch everything, and the things get dusty.

"Hic !" he hiccupped again. "Excuse this hiccup. I must have eaten too many onions. Just wait a minute," he said, and left the room.

"A strange kind of manager," said Elnikitka.

"Perhaps you'd better do the explaining yourself, Elena Nikitichna," said I.

"You've always got to poke your nose in where you're not wanted, Riabtsov," she answered. "I don't have to do what *you* say."

When the manager returned, I noticed that he didn't smell of onions any more, but of

¹ Probably meaning Sèvres porcelain.

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something quite different. "What's on the ceiling?" the fellows asked. "On the ceiling," said the manager, "you see the goddess Benus, and the shepherd Bulcan driving round her in a chariot; and you know he's a shepherd because of the whip in his hand, and it was all painted by a very famous African artist."

"And what was the artist's name?" we asked.

"I've forgotten," said the manager. "I can't remember everything."

A loud "Hic!" came from behind. It was Yushka Gromov who had hiccupped. Then the manager sat down in a red armchair and closed his eyes and said:

"Children, my children, and you, noble instructress of the Red Education! Forgive me, but I see a chain glittering before my eyes."

"What kind of chain?" we asked.

"A diamond chain," he said. "I'll be all right in a moment—too much onion doesn't agree with me."

Then he got up and we went on. We came to an enormous hall—big enough for a football field—with a huge candelabra, all covered up, hanging from the ceiling, and with a gallery running round the walls.

"Here," said the manager, "His Excellency—Mr. Urusov cut his throat."

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"Why did he do that?" we asked.

"Because he saw a ghost."

"What kind of ghost?"

"The white madam," said the manager in a terrible voice. "And this white madam was so delicate, so manly, if I may say so, that Mr. Urusov couldn't bear it."

"Oh," whispered one of the girls.

"Citizen manager," said Elnikitka, "I hope you fully realise that ghosts are a mere superstition, and I hope you'll at once explain the absurdity of such stories to the children."

"Hic!" said the manager. "I really shouldn't eat onions. It isn't my fault if I'm told to explain things exactly as they happened. I wasn't here at the time, and I didn't see it, so you can't expect me to know. But—excuse me—I see a village burning before my eyes"; and he leant against the wall.

"What village?" said Elnikitka impatiently; and one could see she was getting angry.

"Epusikha," said the manager. "Only if you don't like my explanations, citizen teacher, you can do the explaining yourself."

"That's right, that's right, Elena Nikitichna will explain," shouted some of us—out of mischief, of course.

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"No, let the manager explain," said some of the others.

"Then let us vote," I shouted. "Let those who want Elena Nikitichna to explain put up their hands."

The majority raised their hands. Elnikitka got wild and said :

"I shan't do anything of the kind ; it is all absolutely disgusting, and we shall all go away at once."

"Why go away so soon ? " said the manager. "I like being with you. However, come back on Assumption Day and my old woman will make some m-meat pies for you."

Elnikitka, however, was in a temper, and ordered us to go back to the railway station. Only when we got to the door, torrential rain began, and it was over two miles to the station.

"Well, we shall have to wait," said Elnikitka.

I looked out. The sky was black on every side, and the manager, standing behind, was saying : "Why go away ? You'll all get soaked to the skin. You'd better stay for the night. We'll stack plenty of hay in the rooms, and some of you can go and sleep in the barn. And there is plenty of milk at the Agri. Department—I'll get you all you want."

"Could we get some bread also?" asked Elnikitka timidly.

"Half a ton if you want it," said the manager. "Honoured instructress, I can prepare a whole banquet for you. Wouldn't you like me to?" he said, and clicked his tongue.

"I don't know what you are saying," said Elnikitka in an angry voice. "It's raining, and the children might catch cold, and so we'll have to stay for the night. Kindly show the children where they can get hay to sleep on; only I shan't allow them to sleep in the barn. And also get some milk and bread; I'll pay for it."

We all asked her to let us sleep in the hay barn, but she said she wouldn't allow it, and that if we insisted she would go back to the station at once and leave us alone. Although we wouldn't have minded that, we had to give way or the school board would have made a row. But it was all the worse for Elnikitka in the end. While the manager was away getting milk and bread, Elnikitka said, "This manager seems very strange. His brains must be a bit lopsided. I must therefore ask you not to have anything whatsoever to do with him. Of course, I know you'd be only too pleased to make friends with him, but I am not going to allow it."

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What can she allow and not allow in any case? If she hadn't said that, probably nothing would have happened, but now we were determined to give her and the girls a real fright.

The rain continued, and, as we couldn't run about the garden, we stayed in the hall and played *salki*.¹ Soon it grew dark, and, as there were no lights, all we could do was to go to sleep. Elnikitka and the girls settled down in one of the rooms, while we all crowded into another. Of course, we talked and kicked about, and Elnikitka shouted at us several times. When things got quiet, Yushka Gromov whispered to me: "Come along now." We had already hidden the sheet in which the provisions from town had been wrapped up, and Yushka put it over his head, and, in case we were overheard, we slipped out into the hall to talk the matter over and see what we could do.

But when we went into the hall we saw a faint light at the other end of it, and I was so overcome that I felt quite queer. Yushka seized my hand: "Look, Kostya, what's that?" "It's probably the manager." "I got quite a fright. Let's go and see what he's doing."

We crawled along towards the light, and

¹ An outdoor game.

found that it was coming from behind a little door which we hadn't noticed before, right underneath the gallery. At first it gave us a queer feeling. The door was slightly open, and when I looked in I saw a primus stove with a teapot on top of it, with a long tube attached to the nozzle and a basin with a bottle underneath. The stove was burning, and the manager was asleep on a chair in front of it.

"He's distilling," Yushka whispered. "An aunt of mine distils in the same way. Look, the bottle's already half full." To see better I bent forward, but just then the door creaked and the manager got up with a jerk and opened his eyes. He swore, bent down to the bottle, to which he did something, and then shut his eyes again.

"I'll start laughing in a second," said Yushka, "I can't stop myself."

I, too, pinched my nose to try and keep myself from laughing when suddenly Yushka let out a loud giggle. The manager jumped up and dashed to the door. We were standing close to the wall, and he opened the door wide and looked into the hall.

"She's wandering about again and spying on me," he mumbled to himself. "Never mind, I'll catch her yet and tear all her hair out."

I wondered whom he was trying to catch, and felt rather queer at the thought of it. Yushka was poking his fist into my side, but I didn't feel like laughing any longer. The manager went back again to the room, and he bent down and was just going to take a gulp from the bottle when Yushka giggled so loudly that it echoed all through the hall.

"Who's there?" yelled the manager, and hopped out into the hall. Then he looked in our direction, and with a fearful howl dashed towards the room where our crowd was sleeping.

Yushka immediately took off the sheet, and we ran up to the gallery and crouched down behind the railings and waited to see what would happen. We heard a row in our two rooms, Elnikitka's voice, as usual, rising above the rest. Meantime the rain had stopped and the moon had come out, so that we could see the manager rushing back into the hall; after him came our folks with Elnikitka wrapped up in her overcoat.

"There, there," said the manager, pointing in our direction, "just underneath the gallery. I saw her standing there, so tall and long, nearly as high as the ceiling."

"But who was it?" they demanded.

"The white madam."

"Are you sure you saw her?" said

Volodka Schmerz—I recognised his voice.

“Perhaps you were half asleep?”

“Half asleep!” he said. “I saw her as well as I see you now! Only she’s gone now, wandering through the other rooms.”

“We’re going back to bed,” said Elnikitka in a sleepy voice, “and if you see anything more, you had better call the janitor and not disturb us; you’ll frighten all the children.”

“Forgive me, instructress,” said the manager; “but if you ever saw the like of it, you’d waken your own father and not just——”

After that Elnikitka and the others went back to their rooms, and the manager brought out a little lamp, searched in all the corners, and then went back again to his room under the gallery. Yushka and I spent another ten minutes in the gallery and then carefully crept down into the hall, but before we were half way down we suddenly saw a shadow appear outside another door under the gallery. I nearly gave a yell, and Yushka grabbed my hand and whispered “What’s that now?” and I knew from his voice he was frightened.

The shadow crept along the wall, and then turned in our direction and disappeared. It slipped along so silently that my heart stopped beating. It didn’t go up the stairs, but went straight to the manager’s door.

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We stopped breathing. What'll happen now? Then we suddenly heard a crash and a roar, and something fell down, and the shadow jumped back into the hall.

"So that's where you've started distilling, you miserable drunkard!" the shadow roared. "Trying to fight, are you? Never mind, just you wait till the manager comes back. Getting into the store-room and distilling booze. Distilling and drinking it too!"

"Damn your eyes, shut up!" groaned the manager, and grabbed the shadow by the neck. "Don't you understand there's an excursion party sleeping here? You'll wake them all up, and then I'll be responsible. I'll pull your hair out—by God, I will!"

Here Yushka and I slipped down the stair and rushed back to our room. The shadow at once stopped talking.

"There you are," said the manager, "the kids have probably been to the lavatory and have heard it all. Always getting me into a mess, the plague take you!" Yushka and I buried our heads in the hay and laughed till we nearly had hysterics. Elnikitka opened the door from the girls' room and said solemnly:

"Of course, I might have known it, would be Riabtsov. But don't worry, Riabtsov, you'll have to pay for this. It's absolutely

sickening. I've no words to tell you what I think of you."

"I'm not worrying," said I, and somehow it didn't seem funny any more.

In the morning an old fellow with blue spectacles woke us up and asked how we had slept. He turned out to be the real manager, who had just returned from town. The other one was merely the janitor, and that's why he'd explained things in such a funny way. The real manager said that the janitor had been there in the old days under the landowner Urusov, and that he would probably have to be thrown out ; it wasn't the first time he had pretended to be the manager.

On the way home we laughed a great deal at Elnikitka for having mistaken a drunken janitor for the manager and for having listened to his explanations. If her subject is nat-history, she had better leave sociology alone.

July 6th

Although Zin-Palna is looking worried and thin—I wonder if she's ill ?—we had another excursion to Golovkino yesterday. And, if it hadn't been for Zin-Palna's presence of mind, it might have ended pretty badly. I went to

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the factory Unit on purpose, and, although the secretary was out, I managed to get a mandate to the Golovkino A.C.Y. requesting them to assist us in our investigation of peasant manners and customs. It was Sunday, and all the peasants were standing about the main street. Many of them had been drunk since the morning, and the local A.C.Y. had unfortunately gone to a meeting of the District Committee over thirty miles away. And this is what happened. Zin-Palna got hold of the chairman and asked him to help us, but, instead of going himself, he sent his son along, a youngster of about fifteen.

We began measuring the plots with the rulers which we had brought with us when a crowd of women and girls and children came up and stared at us. While the others were doing the measuring, I thought I'd take this chance to examine peasant manners, so I went up to the girls and began to talk to them. When I asked them to sing, they giggled and hid behind one another and said they didn't know any songs. Then I asked if any of them had ever seen a wood-ghost. "You're a wood-ghost yourself!" said one of them, pointing at me. Suddenly one of the fellows came up to me and said: "What are you hanging round our girls for? Is that what you've come here for?" When I took out

the mandate and showed it to him, he looked at it and said : " This has nothing to do with us. If you're a Communist, go and see your Communists, but leave our girls alone." I began to argue with him, and they crowded round me, when suddenly I noticed that our crowd was getting excited about something. While they were measuring the land beside the allotments, some of the peasant children had gone into a farm and, having picked some beans there, had then said that we had done it. An auntie hopped out of the farm and started shouting, and then she rushed at Zin-Palna, shaking her fists and yelling : " If you're a teacher, you ought to look after them ! "

Zin-Palna calmly replied : " I'm not responsible for any of your village kids ; mine were all here with me."

" You think I didn't see, do you, how that one there was picking my beans ? " she shouted, pointing at me.

" Why are you telling lies, auntie ? " I shouted back, getting angry. " When did I pick any of your beans ? "

" And he's been pestering our girls as well ! " the village lads bawled.

And then Zin-Palna quite unexpectedly roared at me : " How dare you pester the girls, Riabtsov ? "

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The row immediately stopped, and, without saying a word, I took out the mandate and showed it to Zin-Palna.

"Well, what about it?" she said.

"If I'm investigating peasant manners, may I ask them to sing songs or mayn't I?"

Then a burly peasant who'd stood aside all the time saying nothing came forward and said: "Unless you want trouble, you'd better get out of here quick!"

And the girls shouted from a distance: "Away with you all! There's your way home!"

A drunken little peasant pushed forward and said: "I know them, they're l-land m-meas-urer-rs and have come about the taxes, God damn their souls!"

"To hell with them! Chuck them out, or we'll get our sticks out!" they all shouted. And the woman whose beans had been stolen started hopping about in front of Zin-Palna threateningly, but Aleshka Cheekin caught her by the arm and flung her aside.

"Is that the way we're being treated, Holy Jesus!" she howled, and a lanky fellow grabbed Aleshka by the shoulder.

"Stop!" roared Zin-Palna again, and her solitary yellow tooth sparkled like a tusk. "Let me say a word."

They were all silent at once.

"You are already prepared to fight us without asking any questions," she said in her teaching manner. "We do not wish you any harm. We want to be your town comrades, and if we are to help you we must draw up a plant." (She *did* say *plant*.)

"Well, and what'll happen?" someone asked quietly.

"This is what'll happen," said Zin-Palna. "You will have our patronage in town; and you will know to whom to apply in case of need, and we shall always be glad to help you. We'll send you newspapers, and we can arrange seed loans for you when you need them. That's what it means to be 'patrons.'"

"Why didn't you say so at once, citizen?" a tall peasant asked.

"*You* never asked us," said Zin-Palna. "Besides, we applied to your chairman, who turned up his nose and wouldn't even talk to us."

"It's just like him," one of the drunks joyfully shouted. "Very important, isn't he? 'I'm this, that, and the other! I'm the So-oviet Pa-a-a-wer!'"

"Well, there you are," said Zin-Palna. "We shall go away now, because you wouldn't let us do our work. Good-bye for the present, only come along to the school.

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And we'll come again some other time. Come along, boys."

"Eh ! But what about my beans ? "

"To hell with you and your beans," a drunkard yelled. "Don't you see these are learned, edu-c-cated folks ! What are you beside them ? Can't you understand ? "

The kids followed us far into the fields, shouting, "Run along, patrons ! Hullo, patrons ! "

When we got back to school Zin-Palna said : "We must do what we promised."

"Yes, we must," we all shouted.

July 10th

I'm beginning to think that Lord Dalton was partly right when he invented his system. One must find things out for one's self ; hearing things from other people is very different.

The Proposal was produced yesterday at the Gromovs'. Old Gromov treated us all to supper after the show, and everybody was given wine to drink. We all stayed on for a long time after supper, and then Maria called me out into the passage. It was terribly dark there, and I bumped against a corner and bruised my head, but said nothing—most likely because my head was

going round so badly with all the wine I had drunk. Maria dragged me along into a kind of cupboard or store-room, where the cat-skins were hung up. I couldn't stand any more of it, and went home. On my way I felt giddy, and my heart beat loudly. It all felt very disgusting, and what I wanted most was that Sylva shouldn't know anything about it. But how could she get to know? She hardly ever talks to Yushka, and carries on with Volodka Schmerz most of the time. She doesn't even seem to notice that Volodka is pally with all the girls in turn, and that she's only one of many. This ought to hurt a woman's vanity, especially in Sylva's case, for she is very proud—probably much prouder than any of our girls.

July 13th

To-day, as a "patron" I went to Golovkino again, and, to be on the safe side, I took Vanka Petukhov with me. He is on leave at present. I told him about the paper I had pinched at the S.L.D.M. and asked him what he thought of it. "Of course," said Vanka, "all such filth does still exist, but it is really all a legacy of the old régime. Now all such unnatural stunts are quite unnecessary, and

everything can be done quite simply and naturally."

I told him I didn't quite understand some of the words in the paper, but that I thought the "simple" way was also disgusting, especially *afterwards*. "I don't know," said Vanka; "probably you aren't used to it. And, besides, it depends a lot on the person."

"What if she's twice as old as yourself?"

"Oh, those are disgusting females," said Vanka, "and you never really know what they're after."

While we were talking we came to Golovkino, and found the village girls in the meadow outside the village. It was Saturday evening, and they were dancing in a curious way, catching hold of each other and whirling round and round.

"May we have a look?" said Vanka.

"Any tobacco on you?" the village lads asked.

"Certainly."

While we smoked, the lads said: "Well, you may look on as long as you like."

Then everybody came up to us and stared at us till I felt kind of awkward.

"My comrade here can tell you stories," said Vanka. I pushed him with my elbow, but all the girls started: "Come on, comrade, tell us an *interesting* story."

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“ He’s lying ; I don’t know any stories.”

But Vanka suddenly grew earnest and said : “ No, I never tell lies.”

Then I thought for a while, and started : “ There’s a country in the world called Finland, and in that country there are many lakes and rocks, and there used to be giants too.” And I went right on from the *Kalevala*. Nearly all of them sat round in a circle and listened. Of course, I left out names like Veiemeinen, but brought the popular beliefs into my story—about not killing frogs and so forth. But when I said that, according to the Finns, frogs had once been human beings, one of the girls threw up her hands and whispered : “ O Lord ! and we used to bury frogs in the ant-heap.”

“ Why did you do that ? ” I asked.

“ To use the bone for charming the men,” the fellows laughed. “ Who was it, Axutka, you were trying to charm ? Was it Stepka ? ”

Then we sang and danced with the village folks (and, although I had never danced before, I enjoyed myself with them).

On the way home Vanka said : “ If you’d have liked we could have played about with them all night. Which one of them did you like most ? ”

But I didn’t want to talk about it.

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It's all too simple, too dog-like, the way Vanka looks at things.

July 18th

Dad asked me to-day : " Kostya, is it true that your inspectress, Zinaida, is using the Cheekin relief money ? "

" Surely you're crazy, dad," I said, staring at him.

" Well, what's wrong in that ? She's keeping the boy ; she may as well be getting the money."

" But it's simply rubbish, dad. Zin-Palna would never do such a thing. It would mean robbing a penniless old woman. And, besides, how much money is there ? "

" Twenty and something, I've been told."

" Spit into the eyes of those who told you."

July 20th

Following the district museum's proposal, we started out at dawn for the ancient camp near the Perhushkvo village. When we arrived, the museum assistants were already there, busy digging. We had a rest and some food and then we also began to dig. The time passed very slowly, and it grew so hot that we took off our shirts.

Suddenly Yushka's shovel struck something hard, and he pulled out a round black object. The chief assistant looked at it and said : " That's only a button."

We were just going to stop digging at that grave when suddenly we came upon some bones. I also pulled one out, and the assistant said it was a horse's hip-bone. We had piled up quite a large heap of bones when some five or six fellows from the village came along and asked : " Are you allowed to dig here ? "

" Of course we are," said the assistants, showing them the permit ; but the peasants said : " We can't allow you to dig for treasures here ; this is communal ground, and you've no business to do any digging on our land."

They argued for a long time, and the peasants threatened to bring along the whole village to chase us away. Finally one of the assistants said : " Let us all dig together ; there are seventeen of us here, and we'll give you some shovels. All the gold we find will be yours ; all the rest will be ours. And, if you don't like it, call for the village folks."

The fellows discussed it among themselves, and evidently they didn't want to share the gold with the rest of the village folks, for they took the shovels and began digging beside us.

Only I noticed that they were digging to the one side—away from where we were. The assistant spoke to them several times, but they continued working in their own way. But on the spot where we were digging there were only bones.

“It’s curious,” said one of the assistants, “but I have never before come across so many bones of animals in a grave.”

The village fellows dug for about half an hour only, then they threw down the shovels and went away. Before going, one of them said: “What do you want all these bones for?”

“Bones are of interest to us,” said the assistants. “From bones you can find out how old this grave is, and many other things.”

“Then why don’t you go to that meadow over there?” said the fellow. “Only horses are buried here, but over there you’ll find cows too.”

“What horses do you mean?” said the assistants.

“Well, there was a cattle plague here about ten years ago, and we buried them all on these two plots. Only more cows were buried over there.”

So we didn’t get to the other grave after all. And for all our digging all that we found was a Tsar’s fifteen-copeck bit.

The assistants said there must have been an error in the museum map, and that the wrong graves had been marked. I think it would have been better if they had consulted the peasants before beginning to dig.

July 22nd

The school is livening up a bit ; more and more people are coming back. Serezhka Blinov has returned, and I had an important talk with him.

" I have definitely decided," he said, " to revolutionise the school. Everybody knows that our skworkers don't fit into their jobs. What we need is a sane and healthy spirit and not the mouldy stuff on which we're being fed."

" I'm not so sure," said I, " but I believe it wouldn't be Lenin-like. We've got to study and enter the H.E.S.¹ as soon as possible."

" You seem to have become a model schoolboy," said Serezhka, and then I got terribly angry and we cursed each other.

And just now dad started about Zin-Palna again.

" Old Cheekin's wife is telling all the neighbours she isn't getting her relief in full."

¹ Higher Education School, i.e. University, Technical College, etc. (Russian—V.U.Z., i.e. Vyssheye Uchebnoye Zavedeniye).

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"Some kind of percentage is probably deducted," I said.

"No," said dad, "it seems the money goes to your inspectress for Aleshka's upkeep, and the old woman says that if she got the relief in full she could clothe and feed Aleshka as well as the inspectress."

"But it's the biggest lie, dad," I said. "I've told you so before, and I'm telling you again that Zinaida Pavlovna wouldn't take a farthing."

"That may be so," he said, "only there you are. How can you stop her talking? She even says she'll go to court."

Oh, the damned fool !

July 25th

It was like a bomb-shell when the education inspector arrived at our school to-day. It's nearly the end of July now, and more than half the school is back. To-day we were proposing to have a general trip to the woods outside the town, but we had a general meeting, with the inspector there, instead.

The inspector began by announcing a general revision of the school ; both teachers and pupils were to be represented on the revision committee. We kept bawling for a long time, but finally, for some reason, the

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majority voted in favour of Serezhka Blinov, and Elnikitka was elected to represent the skworkers. A rumour immediately went round among the fellows—I don't know how it started—that a complaint had been made against our school, saying that a bourgeois tendency could be observed among the teachers and that the present teachers did not fit into their jobs. I was terribly angry when I heard this, but some of the fellows—including Serezhka's young brother, Grishka Blinov—went aside and started whispering among themselves. I sent a fellow along to the whisperers, and five minutes later I learned that, if an inquiry was held, they would report various cases, which would show that the skworkers had been unjust and were very like the teachers of the old school. I began to argue loudly against this, but most of the fellows wouldn't take sides.

Grishka Blinov got ploughed in maths, sociology, and Russian, and has had to stay for another year in Group II.

The revision committee meets in the teachers' room, and, of course, we aren't told anything about it, and Serezhka Blinov behaves as though he'd eaten too much porridge. Grishka Blinov's party has grown, but mine is just the same as before. When I was passing the lecture-hall, I looked

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in and saw Sylva and Volodka Schmerz sitting there all alone. I meant to ask them whether they were for me or for Grishka Blinov, but left them alone. I remembered how Sylva had always been my faithful comrade and helped me in difficulties like this, and I felt terribly sad when I realised that there was no one I could confide in. And I was never to blame for anything in my relations with Sylva. I wandered about the school court for a long time and then went home feeling lonely and lost.

What can she see in him ?

July 27th

I've been to Maria's. Disgusting, disgusting, disgusting.

July 28th

Although it's very silly, I've written these verses :

I think of you and of your clever mind,
And of our speechless contact in this school ;
You speak to others, leaving me behind,
But, all the same, of you my thoughts are full."

Are these good or bad verses ?

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July 29th

The inspector called in some of us and asked what kind of interrelations existed among the pupils. The skworkers go about looking very worried these days. Nikpetozh has come back and asked me about it all, but I couldn't tell him very much. I'm too busy thinking of other things. "It's revolting that the inspector should act in that manner," said Nikpetozh. "He should have called a school meeting first."

I was called to the inspector almost immediately after this. Elnikitka, looking terribly pale, and Serezhka Blinov, with cast-down eyes, were in the room.

"Tell us, Comrade Riabtsov," said the inspector, "what you know of the relation between your inspectress and the pupils."

"I'll answer you at the school meeting, comrade," I answered.

"I have full authority," said the inspector.

"Well, show it to the school meeting then," I said, and walked out.

Then I looked for Black Zoya and said :
"Do you remember what you said to me in the spring ?"

"Yes, I remember," said Zoya, opening her eyes widely.

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“ In that case I may rely on you. Read these verses—they don’t refer to you—and give me your opinion.”

“ I know they don’t refer to me,” she drawled, and started reading the verses to herself. She read them for a long time, several times over, evidently pondering over every word.

I was naturally greatly interested to hear what she would say, but, as she said nothing, I finally asked her : “ Are you trying to learn them by heart ? ”

And then I noticed that she was crying, and suddenly she said to me quickly : “ You had no business to give me these verses if they are dedicated to another.”

I took the paper from her hand and quietly left the room. The devil knows what to make of these girls !

I barged into Volodka Schmerz and Sylva in the athletic hall. I let them go past, and then called after them : “ Hullo, Invincible ! ”

“ What do you want with me, Riabtsov ? I’m not bothering you.”

“ Of course you’re not,” I said, and went on, but Sylva stood there looking at me with a surprised expression.

July 30th

The revision committee is still going on, and the skworkers are said to have sent in a protest to the Central Administration, and there is even a rumour that they're all going to resign. I've talked to some of the fellows, and we're going to take certain steps.

This is what's happened to me next. I went to the Gromovs and again found Maria alone there.

When she wanted to paw me, and began saying I was mean not to have come sooner, I answered : " I believe all this is sexual perversion."

" But why ? " she said, looking surprised.

" Come along," I said. " I want to read something to you." And we walked into the garden.

There I took out and read to her the paper I had snaffled at the S.L.D.M. Maria went quite red and said : " What's this disgusting stuff ? "

" I think you're just as disgusting yourself."

" But why ? " said Maria, and I could even see how her nose got red through the powder.

" I thought you liked it."

" No," I said firmly, " I don't want to live the life of a degenerate. Good-bye."

" You're a stupid boy. That's all you are."

" All right."

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“ And you’ve no right to leave me. This isn’t the old régime. I’ll apply for an allowance.”

She still kept on shouting as I was going away.

There would have to be a kid before she could apply for an allowance, and she can’t catch me that way.

(A crumpled typewritten sheet with a seal of the S.L.D.M. was found inserted here in Riabtsov’s diary.)

“ After you’ve read this letter, you may call me a fool, an idiot, a degenerate, etc., but I am every bit as normal as you, only I’m an uneducated working man, while you are educated intellectuals. You know that the living conditions of a working man were terrible ; that people lived in darkness and ignorance, and the education of their children was not only abnormal, but revolting, and often parents would get drunk out of joy or sorrow, and then there would be fights, and the father would beat the mother and drive the children into the street, or sometimes they would do awful things like having sexual connection in front of the children, and calling things by their own names, and even doing this when they were sober ; and they didn’t feed the

children, but used to beat and thrash them with anything they could lay their hands on. Now that's the kind of upbringing I've had. I'm a moral cripple. I am both morally and physically defective, and I am a sick man, but it isn't my fault ; it's the fault of the surroundings in which I've had to grow up, it's the fault of the society which has created such an abnormal life, and you must take measures against this disease—not imprisonment, but better and more rational measures. You ought to be ashamed of punishing innocent men, unhappy martyrs. All your Education Departments and Legal Departments put people in jail for five years for such things, but I'm the son of a poor working man ; I've been brought up under abnormal conditions. I don't know when, how, and why I began going wrong, but it's a fact that I'm a miserable wretch, and when I was only ten I was already committed to bad habits. People despise me ; the Government threatens me with prison ; to whom can I talk ? Only those suffering from the same ills will understand me. All the same, I've decided to appeal to our Government of Peasants and Workers requesting that these things should not be punished any longer, but medically

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treated instead. I want to be reformed. Give me a chance ; I'm not to blame ; someone else is to blame, not I ; give me a chance to get cured ; save me or shoot me, but don't put me in jail. I'm afraid of punishment, that's why I don't give my name, or you may arrest me. And I am thirty-five years old. And when I see all the strays going in for the same things, I know that more moral cripples like myself are being made, and they won't do any good to anyone and will only harm the Government of Workers and Peasants : save me, save me,

“ Your pupil.

“ Society, look at your fruits ! As you sow, so you shall also reap. Don't dare punish us ; punish yourselves.—*March 26th.*”

July 31st

This was a decisive day. I had warned a few fellows this morning, and at four o'clock a general meeting, including the school council and the revision committee, was called. None of the skworkers except Elnikitka attended. I assembled all the reliable ones round me, and we took up the first few benches right in front of the præsidium, and Yushka Gromov, who has

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the strongest lungs, was placed right behind the revision committee's table.

The inspector opened the meeting with a speech. "Well, comrades," he said, "you see in me a representative of the Institute of Inspectors, which, in the name of the Central Administration, supervises the management of schools, and which interferes in the work whenever it comes to know of any maladministration. I cannot say that I have observed any blatant expressions of mismanagement at your school ; nevertheless, I regret to say that I have become aware of a certain undesirable tendency. Be it as it may, the revision committee has, under my presidency, decided on the following statement——"

"I didn't sign it," Elnikitka suddenly screamed, and fell back into her chair. A bottle of smelling-salts was at once put to her nose, and she came back to her senses.

"Well, comrades," the inspector continued, "this statement says that the school workers in your school are not suitably qualified for their particular posts."

Here I gave the signal.

"Down ! Down ! Nonsense ! Lies ! Lies !" my fellows shouted on all sides.

"Down with you," roared Yushka, right

into the ear of the inspector, who nearly jumped out of his seat.

Stasya Velipolsky, who was chairman, rang the bell as hard as she could, but the noise didn't subside until I gave another signal, at which my party calmed down ; only I could hear Grishka Blinov's voice blurting out from behind : " Shame, Riabtsov."

I got up and said : " Please leave personalities out."

" Besides, comrades," said the inspector, " the revision committee, after investigation, has decided to raise the question at the general meeting as to whether those school workers who are not competent may or may not remain at the school."

Here I gave another signal, and, after the noise had subsided a bit, Serezhka Blinov spoke. " I stand before you in a double rôle ; firstly, as your comrade ; secondly, as your elected member of the revision committee."

" What are you ? " I shouted. " A two-headed eagle ? "

" In any case not a one-headed snake warmed on my own breast." (I don't know what this was supposed to mean.) " Comrades, I uphold the proposal of the revision committee for the following reasons—our self-government is limping on both legs,

and is entirely ineffective. The teaching is done in a scrappy way, and has nothing to do with our lives. The school is unconnected with any form of production——”

“ Why didn’t you say anything before ? ” Elnikitka shrieked. “ You go to the Unit meetings.”

“ If you are willing, comrades, to listen to me quietly,” said the inspector, “ I shall tell you this : no final decision is to be made here, for such a decision can only be made by the Central Administration ; all we shall do is to discuss the questions touched upon, and draw up a report on the opinion of the school.”

“ Allow me,” I said. “ We have with us here the secretary of the factory Unit at which we are inscribed ; let him express his own opinion later, but now listen to me. Serezhka Blinov ! Did you, like Elena Nikitichna, spend the night at Solnechnoye ? Did you see the white madam ? Did you protect us when the peasants were going to beat us ? Did you refuse to take a vacation, as Zin-Palna did ? Did you take it upon yourself to bring up Aleshka Cheekin after his father died ? Tell us, Serezhka ! Do you explain to us, as Nikolay Petrovitch does, all those harassing questions with which one’s head can go to pieces and one’s hands drop

off? And you say the school is unconnected with life. While we were spending last summer in deadly danger examining villages, collecting nat-history materials, digging up sepulchres, where were you? Lying on the grass with your belly in the air? Does that mean that you fit into your place, and Zinaida Pavlovna doesn't? Is that what you mean?"

Without any signal on my part, a fearful noise followed this speech; some shouted for me, others shouted against me. The secretary of the Unit then asked for a hearing and said: "I do not agree with Comrade Inspector when he considers the basis of the school unrational simply because it isn't linked up with the Unit. If the Comrade had come to our Unit first we would have told him that, although the school had certain faults, it nevertheless carried on normally; it would indeed be strange if the Unit didn't know of the teachers' incompetence, did such a thing exist. Personally I'm hearing it now for the first time. It was thoroughly unreasonable of Comrade Blinov not to have mentioned the matter to the Unit before. It makes me think that Comrade Blinov doesn't really feel any *stabilisation* under his feet."

"I thought these were purely school matters," Serezhka mumbled.

"No, Comrade Blinov, these are social matters, and very much so," said the secretary, "and I say it to everybody present, that if it hadn't been for Comrade Riabtsov, who evidently sees the duties of a Red youth more clearly than most of the others, this business might have ended in a very unfortunate way."

"Hear, hear, Kostya!" Yuřhka roared, but I made a sign, and he stopped. And here I saw Zin-Palna enter the hall.

"As for the link with production, we ought to know most about *that*, Comrade Inspector," said the secretary. "Please come to the Unit and we'll explain it all to you. As regards the Cheekin orphan, whom the inspectress has taken into her care, the Unit has asked me publicly to express our gratitude to Zin-Palna for her generous action, as well as for her self-denying social activity during the past twenty——"

Here the thunder of applause nearly brought the house down. The secretary laughed, nodded his head, and pushed his way towards the door. I shouted into his ear (with all the noise going he wouldn't have heard me otherwise): "Where are you going, Ivanov?"

He shouted in reply: "They'll manage fine without me now."

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I turned round and saw that the inspector had disappeared, and then I saw Elnikitka rushing towards me at full speed ; I wanted to avoid her, but she got hold of me in the crush and shouted : “ I’ve changed my mind about you, Riabtsov.”

What the devil do I need her change of mind for ? Suddenly Black Zoya pulled me by the sleeve. “ Wait, Kostya. You must make peace with Sylva. Now at least appreciate me for this.”

And Sylva stood behind her looking at me and saying : “ Well, Vladlen——”

I took her by the hand.

August 5th

As there isn’t much to do at school at present, I spend most of my time on the football field. Dad has ruined himself buying a pair of new boots for me, so that I can play in the second team now. If you’ve no boots you aren’t allowed to play in the second. I play as right-forward, and sometimes take the place of the right inner. I tried to play goal also, but the captain wouldn’t let me, as I always run out from the posts. I don’t think it’s much good if the goalkeeper stands on one spot all the time waiting for the ball to hop in. At that rate the ball may not only be

kicked in, but literally pushed in from two feet away. I was very sorry about it, for the goalkeeper is the most responsible person in the game, and at matches it's the goalkeeper who gets all the applause, and no one takes any notice of the halves. But I obeyed the captain all the same, because a football team is a collective body, and, if it isn't ruled by the strictest discipline, the whole game goes to pot. In our second team, for instance, Yushka Gromov plays the left-outer ; but he *will* lead, and as a result either the back or the inners gets the ball. We've told him several times that it was all wrong, and that if everybody wanted to keep the ball there would never be any passing, and the passing teams always win, but Yushka goes on playing in his own way and he just won't listen. He argues that Kukushkin, the famous left-outer, always leads, and that that's the shortest cut to the other people's goal. The captain has warned Yushka that if he continues he'll be transferred to the third team and won't be allowed to take part in important matches. Yushka has promised not to lead any more, but while we were training yesterday with the third team he led just the same again ; although he managed this time to get through with the ball three times, the captain gave him a row.

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Yushka tried to justify himself saying that if one passed in front of the opponents' goal one ran the risk of the whistle, to which the captain replied : " Pass with your hind leg, and there will be no off-side." Everyone laughed, and I told Yushka on our way home that if he didn't look out he'd be transferred to the third team. Yushka said he didn't care a rap ; if anything like that happened to me, I would stop playing football altogether, or at any rate on this field.

August 6th

Nearly everybody is now back at school, and at the general meeting to-day Zin-Palna proposed that we resume the regular daily work with the skworkers. Those who don't want to may do without it, but they must take part in all the walks and excursions. But those who are willing to work are not to cut any classes and are to promise to come to school every day. The large majority agreed to this, because the work will not be run according to schedule, but in the group manner ; some will work with Almakfish on wireless and put up a receiver at the school ; others will stage a play with Nikpetozh ; Zin-Palna proposed a seminar on Pushkin.

She said that Pushkin was such a great poet that it was no sin to learn him off by heart.

Volodka Schmerz asked what Pushkin had been killed for, and Zin-Palna explained that there was a man called Danthès who wouldn't leave Pushkin's wife alone, and that Pushkin was obliged to challenge him to a duel, and that this duel ended very sadly for Pushkin. But if I were Pushkin I wouldn't have challenged him to any duel, but would have taken him aside and knocked his face in ; and if he still continued I would have given him a Danish football kick in the belly ; he might have stopped then ! This Danthès fellow was evidently a pretty big skunk—something like our Volodka Schmerz, who won't leave any one of the girls alone, and who gets beaten by everybody.

All kinds of fantastic rumours have started going round the school ; and the girls, of course, are most excited about it. They spend their time whispering to each other mysteriously, but they usually just talk rubbish. For instance, a story has been going round about something that happened last year in Moscow. A little girl in a pink dress one day came to Dr. Sneghirev and said that her mother was ill and would the doctor go and see her. She gave the address and went away. No sooner was she gone than the

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doctor wanted to find out some more about her mother's illness in order to know what medicines to take with him ; so he called the maid and told her to bring the little girl back. The maid said she hadn't seen any little girl. Then the doctor called for the janitor downstairs, but he hadn't seen the little girl either. The doctor was terribly surprised, and drove to the address the child had left, and actually found a sick woman there. As he started examining her the woman asked him who had told him her address. The doctor said it was her daughter. The woman then began to weep, and said her daughter had died three days ago, and that her body lay in the next room, and that she hadn't the strength to bury her. The doctor went next door, and there he saw the little girl in the pink dress lying on the table. This story is to show that people can wander about after death. When they told me this I merely spat on the floor.

August 7th

Something unpleasant has happened—a collision with Zin-Palna. Like the others, I promised to attend school regularly, and today I spent all the schooltime on the football field and didn't arrive until all the seminars

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were over. On my way in I met Zin-Palna, who said she "hadn't expected it from me."

"What didn't you expect?" I asked.

"A breach of discipline," she said, "and a neglect of the seminar meetings."

I pointed out that it was still summer, and that it was quite natural to spend most of the time out of doors, and that it was necessary to go in for phys-culture as much as possible. But Zin-Palna replied that everything should be done systematically, and, since I had made a promise, I had no right to break it. Besides, she didn't regard football as phys-culture at all, but as a very harmful game, comparable with smoking and drinking. She said it became so much of a habit that one simply couldn't drag oneself away from it, and that I was a good example of such a passion.

On the whole it was very unpleasant to have got into trouble with her about football.

After that I loafed about the school for a while, and was just going home when Sylva called me and we both sat down in the lecture-hall and talked. I told her about the Zin-Palna and football incident, and Sylva thought Zin-Palna was right about not taking football too seriously. I was beginning to argue when Black Zoya popped her head into the room and said in a mysterious tone

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of voice : “ Kostya Riabtsov, I’ve got something to tell you.”

I immediately got up. She took me into the courtyard, where we sat down, and she said : “ I want to tell you a story. Forgive my interrupting your sentimental talk, only your *tête-à-têtes* with Sylva may evoke certain suspicions, not only among the fellows, but also among the skworkers. And, although I’m very fond of Sylva, I dislike her behaviour lately.”

I got angry at this, and said : “ If you are going to talk like this, you can go to hell. Sylva and I have no ‘ sentimental talks,’ and I simply treat Sylva as a good comrade. What’s wrong with her behaviour, anyhow ? What kind of suspicions are you talking about ? I tell you it’s all bunk, and I don’t know what you’ve got against her.”

“ Keep still and sit down,” said Zoya. “ I’ve called you here to tell you a story. Listen. My brother arrived from the south yesterday with a wounded arm. And this is what he told mother and me. Brother is an aviator, and worked somewhere down in the south—in Sukhum, I think. Well, one night they were having a drinking-party some seven or eight miles outside the Sukhum place, and, after the party was over, brother went home. As he’s an army man, he had a revolver

hanging from his belt. It was late and very dark—brother says the nights down in the south are much darker than here. Well, brother went on and on, and in the end he got lost. Perhaps he had drunk too much liquor—and it was so dark all round that you wouldn't know if your eye was being poked out. Brother walked on at random when suddenly he noticed some lights, and, thinking he'd come to a Tartar village, he went towards the lights, only just before he got there someone stopped him and asked: 'Where are you going?' Brother said he was going to Sukhum. Then the man who had stopped him promised to show him the Sukhum road. Brother agreed and followed the stranger, but, to be on the safe side, he kept his hand on his revolver. They went on and passed the village, and then brother began to stumble against rocks. 'Where are you leading me?' he asked the stranger, and pulled out his revolver. Then the man turned an electric torchlight right on his eyes. After the darkness it naturally blinded him for a moment, but he raised his gun all the same. At that very moment someone hit his arm violently, and he dropped the revolver. And when brother turned round, he saw that the fellow had a torchlight in one hand and a revolver in the other. And another individual

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clutching a revolver, stood behind the first one. They both told brother to follow them without a word, and, as there was nothing else to do, brother went."

"I would have rammed my head into his belly and knocked him down," said I, "and snatched his revolver and shot the other fellow."

"Yes, it's easy enough to talk," said Zoya, "but while you were knocking one down the other would have fired at you from behind. So brother followed them in complete darkness, only the one in front carried the little torchlamp. After a while brother saw they were passing among some curiously shaped stones, but at last they stopped, and got a shovel from somewhere and told brother to dig. Brother then realised they were ordering him to dig his own grave, but, as the two revolvers were pointed at him, there was nothing else to do, so he started digging. The earth was very soft, and in a short time he had dug a hole two feet deep. Only then the shovel suddenly knocked against something solid. 'I can't dig any farther,' brother said: 'there's something hard here.' Then one of the individuals bent down and poked his dagger at the hard bit, and then pulled out several planks, and opened up a big black cavity. 'Get in,' the fellow said to

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brother. 'Why?' he asked. 'Ask no questions, or we'll shoot you,' they replied. Well, there was nothing else to do, so he went down."

"I would have refused," said I.

"Well, what would you have done?"

"I don't know. I might have thrown myself at them rather than be buried alive."

"Well, brother went down; it was a fairly big hole, about eight or nine feet deep. And the fellows were shining their torchlights into it. 'Hand us the coffin,' they said. 'What coffin?' 'Look closely, and you'll find a coffin there.' They lowered the torchlights, and brother saw a coffin wrapped in a white cloth. He tried to lift up the coffin, but couldn't. 'It's too heavy,' he said. 'I can't do it.' 'Then roll the cloth off the coffin.' At last brother managed to get the cloth off, and handed it to them. 'Now open the coffin,' they said. He tried, but nearly broke his fingers. 'I can't do it,' he said: 'the lid must be nailed or screwed on.' 'Then take this dagger,' they said, and threw one into the hole. Brother slid the blade under the lid and pulled till the lid flew off. And then he saw a beautiful young woman lying in the coffin, wrapped in the same kind of cloth. 'Is the woman there?' they asked from

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above. 'Yes,' said brother. 'What's she got on?' 'She's wrapped in the same kind of cloth.' 'Take it off.' There was nothing else to do, so he had to unwrap the cloth; there must have been sixty *arshins* of it."

"How much is that in metres?" I asked.

"If you can't be serious, I'll stop talking. Well, brother got all the cloth out of the coffin and handed it to them. 'Now give us the woman,' they said. 'How?' said brother. 'Just lift her out and hand her to us.' Brother lifted the dead body with an effort and then handed it to them. They caught hold of it from above, but either the corpse caught on to something, or they thought that brother was pulling it back, or perhaps they wanted to straighten it out; at any rate, instead of poking their dagger into the corpse they dug it into brother's arm, and he gave a yell. 'What are you shouting for?' they asked. 'Why, you've cut my arm.' And he let go the corpse and dropped to the ground himself. 'Well, take the rings off the fingers.' Brother managed somehow to tie up the wound with his handkerchief, and started pulling at the rings, but they wouldn't come off, and it seemed as if the corpse were pulling the other way. 'I can't get them off,' said brother. 'Then chop the

fingers off with this dagger.' 'I shan't.' 'Why not?' 'I shan't,' said brother, and then he lost consciousness.

"I don't know how long he remained there like this, but when he came to himself he saw a square piece of sky above his head and the stars were shining. He couldn't understand where he was, and stayed like that for about five minutes ; but suddenly he saw a head with burning eyes appearing in the square. Brother got so frightened that he roared like mad. But the head roared even louder, and instantly disappeared. Then brother again lost consciousness, and when he came to himself he was in a little room with a police inspector sitting beside him. 'Are you Travnikov?' the inspector asked. 'Yes.' 'Tell us what happened to you.' Brother told him. 'All this sounds like the truth,' said the inspector ; 'and now you are in the keeper's lodge in the Tartar cemetery. Only can you explain the strange presence of this object in your pocket?' And he produced a cut-off finger with a ring on it. Brother looked at it and said he didn't know. Then he asked the inspector what he thought of the whole story. The inspector said the fellows were graveyard robbers who, with brother's help, had robbed the grave of a Tartar princess who had been

buried a few days ago. And the head that had appeared above the grave was also a robber, only from another gang ; and when he had heard brother yell he was so panic-stricken that he ran his head against a tombstone and killed himself."

" And what about the others ? "

" The cloth gave them away. They were selling it at the bazaar in Sukhum, and got taken. At the cross-examination they admitted that they'd put the finger into brother's pocket on purpose, so that the suspicion might fall on him. Then brother was let off and was given leave, and that's why he's at home now."

" That all ? "

" That's all."

" And the dead girl—was that another of your stories ? "

" What do you think ? Don't you believe a dead girl could come to a doctor ? "

" I thought it was you."

I got up and shouted : " Sylva ! Sy-ylva ! "

And Black Zoya followed me, mumbling : " Sylva's gone. Sylva's gone."

I looked for her everywhere, but couldn't see her anywhere in the school building. She must have gone home. And Zoya followed, making fun of me : " You see, she

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didn't wait for you. She gets on fine without you."

Then it suddenly dawned on me that Zoya had purposely dragged me away from Sylva, only I still don't know why. I got angry, and handed her out a Red Army ration ; she began to cry, and I went home.

August 8th

The *EX* has unexpectedly come out again after a long time. There is an enormous ballad in it, beginning like this :

*We all talk the telegraph lingo,
Our motto is "Shortness and Speed,"
And though it's not easy, by Jingo!
To write of the moon and the mead
In verses poetic
And very æsthetic,
We'll try, all the same, to succeed.*

*Starnight was fulfragrant and volup.
When two comradthieves crept along
And stole the Kitchtub (what civcorrup !),
Unwaking fastsleeping housecom.*

That's damn good, only I wonder who wrote it? Kolka Paltusov and I have decided to talk only this telegraph language in future.

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It's very quick and useful, and no one else can make out what you are saying.

August 9th

I don't like girls who are idiots, yet most of them seem to belong to that class ; but if there's anyone who really deserves the name, it is Yushka Gromov. He's told everyone about Maria and me. I don't know what's made his tongue itch so badly, but talking without a reason proves anyone a fool.

He went even one better to-day. He suddenly dashed into the phys lab (none of the skworkers were there at the time) and shouted like mad : " Nikpetozh's gone crazy about Stasya Velipolsky." Of course, all the fellows asked him how he knew, and the girls got even more excited. Yushka told them how Nikpetozh and Stasya had walked about the court and then had gone behind the woodstack, and that Nikpetozh had held Stasya's hand and had spoken to her very excitedly. Yushka said he had hidden on the other side of the woodstack, and that was how he had heard it all. If Yushka hadn't talked about Maria and me, I might not have taken any notice of his new stories, but now I realise that Yushka's really fond of idiotic gossip, and that he simply can't be trusted.

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Zin-Palna started her Pushkin seminar to-day, and told us the story of his life in detail. Then Volodka got up, and, making a fool of himself as usual, asked : " What did Pushkin feel when his wife was pregnant ? " Zin-Palna replied : " Look here, Schmerz ; perhaps I would have answered your question if you'd asked it seriously, but, as you've merely asked it out of hooliganism, one of us must leave the hall, you or me."

Then Volodka began arguing that it wasn't out of hooliganism at all, and that he himself had read Pushkin's letter where he wrote : " Now that you are pregnant——" But everybody began shouting " Get out of here, Schmerz ! This is a lecture-hall, not a back-yard "—and Volodka had to leave the room in disgrace.

August 10th

At football to-day Yushka began to blether about Nikpetozh and Stasya. It was a damn shame, especially as many of the players don't belong to our school at all, and so I told Yushka to stop the nonsense.

" What'll you do to me if I don't ? " he demanded.

" I'll knock your face in," I said,

" You'd better not try."

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I didn't try, but arranged with Kolka Paltusov, who plays right-outer in the third team, to lay him out. When the forwards of the third team got the ball, Kolka ran after Yushka, who was leading as usual, and, pretending to snatch the ball from Yushka, he threw himself right under his feet and stopped him from going any farther ; at that very moment I came running up from behind and bashed Yushka on the head. Yushka fell back, screaming like mad : " Oh, hell ! Riabtsov did it on purpose, the bloody skunk ! "

Everybody could see I hadn't done anything wrong, and the captain merely gave Kolka a lecture about his rough play. Yushka couldn't walk, for his leg was terribly bruised and swollen, and the fellows had to carry him home on a stretcher.

August 11th

There's a girl at school called Fluffy. She's very fat, and everybody tries to squeeze her. They drive her into a corner, and when they squash her she squeaks like a fish. I say so for fun, for I know quite well that fishes don't squeak.

To-day we squeezed Fluffy into a corner, when suddenly Elnikitka rushed into the

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room and started screaming at the pitch of her voice that it was revolting and outrageous, and that she would bring it before the school board and the general meeting—why not before the Sovnarkom,¹ while she was at it?—until I finally asked her to tell us what exactly we had done. “You know best yourself,” she screamed. “And don’t act the hypocrite ; it’s as plain as daylight.” Then some of the older girls came running along, screaming that the boys had become impossible and that they never stopped pestering the girls. I couldn’t stand it any longer, and told them it was all lies and that Fluffy was used to being squeezed, and that there was nothing wrong with it. And I added that it was Elnikitka who had gone mad. Then Elnikitka called the girls round her like a hen with her chickens, and pompously announced : “ Riabtsov is again showing us what he really is. I thought he had turned over a new leaf, but all this revolting business just shows in what direction his thoughts still turn ” ; and they all seized Fluffy by the arms and dragged her away—no doubt to make a complaint.

About ten minutes later Nikpetozh came along and called us into the lecture-hall,

¹ Soviet Narodnykh Komissarov—Council of the People’s Commissars ; i.e. The Soviet Government.

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and gave us another long lecture on sex problems. Then he pulled out a book and started reading a story by Turgenev called *First Love* in which a youngster goes crazy about a grown-up woman. We laughed quite a lot, and then I asked Nikpetozh : "Do you want us to learn from this story that strong and ideal love can exist? Don't you know, Nikolay Petrovitch, we are quite aware of it already?" Nikpetozh got a little embarrassed, and said : "Well, you see, some of the school workers seem to think that your ideas on love and sex are perverted."

"And what is your proof?" I asked...

"Well, for example, your attitude to Lena Orlova." (That's Fluffy's name.) "The school workers see a morbid tendency in your actions."

"Elena Nikitichna, I suppose?"

"That's just the point; it isn't only Elena Nikitichna; but the inspectress, and Fisher, and Ludovica Carlovna (our singing teacher), think just the same."

"But what exactly did we do?" I asked flaring up. "Of course, we squeezed Fluffy. But what about it? Everybody squeezes her, and there have never been any rows before."

"Well," said Nikpetozh, "the school

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workers noticed this constant carrying-on with Lena Orlova before, and what makes it worse is that Lena Orlova doesn't object. You ought to know, Riabtsov, that one can only squeeze a girl so long as she doesn't mind. We've decided to put an end to it, and to discuss the question of Marxian ethics and morality with you."

When Nikpetozh went away I ran after him and asked him: "Tell me frankly, Nikolay Petrovitch, were we really in the wrong about Lena Orlova?"

"I don't see any great harm in it myself, but I do think that you ought to stop squeezing her. The trouble is that Elena Nikitichna maintains that you are capable of corrupting any girl, and that you had a real affair last summer with Gromov's sister."

"But how does she know?" I asked, and I'm sure I began to blush.

"Is there really anything in it?" said Nikpetozh, looking sternly at me.

"What do you mean by 'really'?" I asked. "I don't think it's anybody's business. Tell me, Nikolay Petrovitch, would you like people to gossip for no reason at all about you and Stasya Velipolsky and all that sort of thing?"

"Why? *Does* anyone gossip?" he quickly asked, and he seemed to have got a fright.

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"Well, there you are ! You don't like it yourself," I said. "Of course, it's all gossip, but people will talk about things that don't concern them in the least, and I don't call *that* Marxian ethics and morality."

"I quite agree with you there, Riabtsov," said Nikpetozh, looking embarrassed ; "gossip is a remnant of the old régime and of the damned past. It exemplified a petty-bourgeois attitude to things. For instance, I never concealed from you the fact that I liked Sylphida Dubinin, but I like her as a human being and not because she is a girl. I feel just the same towards the Velipolsky girl. It would be rather strange, wouldn't it, if I went in for love-making at school ? "

"Sylva's got nothing to do with it," I said. "No one would dare to maintain that our relations were anything but comrade-like. Besides, Sylva and I are so devoted to the cause of the Revolution that all personal relations have to take a second, third, or even tenth place."

"I quite believe it," said Nikpetozh. "I value Sylphida so much that I would never admit the thought of her ever going too far. All the same, Riabtsov, couldn't you tell me, as a friend, who it is that spreads those idiotic rumours about me and Velipolsky ? "

"I can't tell you that, Nikolay Petrovitch, because you might persecute the person in your social——"

"Never!" he exclaimed, and got quite red. "I never mix up my social and personal relations. But what I want to know is, not the scandalmonger's name, but whether he's a pupil or a school worker."

"He's a pupil," I said.

"Well, thank you, Riabtsov," he said. "In any case, you can be sure that I'll watch your interests in the Orlova incident; I don't think the whole matter is worth a bad egg."

"Well, yougofel!" I said.

"What do you mean?" asked Nikpetozh.

"It means 'You're a good fellow,' and I used it instead of 'Thank you.'"

"Well, you've started to corrupt your native language early in life," he said peevishly. "It's being corrupted more than necessary already."¹

"I don't merely corrupt; I also create."

"Well, I don't think that that is much of a creation," he said as we parted.

¹ Referring to the composite words denoting various Soviet organisations (e.g. Sovnarkom, *v. supra*) and the use of foreign technical words in non-technical, everyday language.

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August 12th

Sylva and I have been to see *Carmen* at the Summer Garden. I used to despise opera, because they sing instead of talking, which seems very unnatural ; and you miss many of the words. But this time I was quite thrilled with it. I began to get excited the moment the lights went out, and it seemed as though the man with the baton who waved to the orchestra wasn't a man at all, but a kind of magician. Then the opera began, and this time I was really able to follow most of it. Although it's rather stupid, yet it makes you think. The opera shows how an officer falls in love with a factory girl—the officer's name is Don José. I don't quite understand the part about another wench called Micaela who comes on and sings for a long time. But it's always like that in opera—suddenly, for no reason at all, somebody comes on, waving his arms about, and howls for half an hour. Carmen also falls in love with him, but for some reason or other he has to take her off to the police station. But as he's leading her along, she suddenly gives him a shove and dashes off. Then Carmen is seen dancing at an inn (this is where I couldn't make out whether she really worked in a factory or whether she just played around). Then the toreador comes in and sings about his

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bull-fights. I liked this bit best, and the toreador was a very good-looking fellow. Then, for no apparent reason, Carmen gets crazy about him (perhaps it's because he's much better looking than José), and makes him some promise—but I couldn't quite make it out. Then the toreador goes away and José suddenly comes in ; only as soon as Carmen begins to dance a fat chief suddenly appears and drives José out, because he wants Carmen too. José draws his sword, and is just going to kill the chief when a crowd of individuals with scarves on their heads instead of hats come rushing in and rescue the chief. And then José becomes a bandit.

In the third act the bandits, along with Carmen and José, are waiting in ambush for the toreador, who has made a lot of money by fighting bulls. Then the bandits hide and leave José to watch for him. Here the Micaela girl turns up again, but José chases her away. Sylva says it's José's fiancée, but I don't believe it, because José's in love with Carmen, and even became a bandit for her sake. The toreador arrives at last, and José goes bang at him with his gun, but misses him. Then he tries to do him in with a dagger, but the toreador pulls one out too, and they start fighting. Only they had no idea how to fight, and did it rather clumsily ;

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suddenly Carmen comes dashing in with the other bandits, and the two are separated. I don't quite understand why they let the toreador off ; perhaps he had no money on him and was merely going to his work. Sylva, however, says that this is all wrong, and that they had no intention of robbing him ; but that's the way it seemed to me, and everybody can understand an opera any way he likes.

In the fourth act a bull-fight is about to start. I don't know how many bulls there were, only there must have been quite a lot, because, apart from the toreador, there are about twenty other toreadors with lances and all kinds of implements going in to fight the bulls. All the people keep waving their arms about ; it's to show how keen they all are to see the fight. After they are all gone, Carmen comes running in. She wants to see the fight too, but José won't let her, because he's jealous of the toreador. Finally she tears herself away and rushes into the circus, but just at this moment José does her in with his dagger.

As Sylva and I were going home she said to me : " Jealousy is a terrible thing. Do you know I used to be jealous about you ? "

My eyes nearly fell out.

"But do you——" I gasped.

"What 'do I'? I know what you mean. But remember this—jealousy doesn't require the existence of a—stronger feeling. One can be jealous of quite harmless people. In your case I have been jealous of Nikpetozh and of other things too. But do you know what I am most jealous of? It's your diary. If you don't want to torment me any more, you ought to let me read it."

After that we walked on for a long time saying nothing. Of course, I don't want to torment Sylva, but, on the other hand, how can I possibly show her my diary? It would be like telling her the kind of things one is almost afraid to discuss with one's own self. Suddenly Sylva said: "Well, it just shows you don't really have any respect for me. If you had any respect for me, it wouldn't take you so long to decide whether you would let me see your diary."

"Listen, Sylva," I said. "A diary is the most secret thing a man possesses. You want me to unwrap my whole soul like a carpet before you, but there are things in my soul which even you mustn't know."

Suddenly Sylva stopped dead and said:

"Well, good-bye!"

"But you've got to go farther."

"Since we have nothing in common, why

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should we walk together? You go your own way, and I'll go mine."

"Look here, Sylva, what do you mean by saying we've nothing in common? That's bunk. We've got a lot in common. But surely you don't want me to appear before you stark naked?"

"Well, if you will talk like a pig, I really think I don't want to have anything more to do with you."

I felt a little hurt.

"I don't talk like a pig. Why did you say that? As for any lack of respect, just listen to this." And here I recited my poem to her :

I think of you and of your clever mind,
And of our silent contact in this school ;
You speak to others, leaving me behind,
But, all the same, of you my thoughts are full.

"Well," said Sylva, "that's a very poor poem. I'm sure your diary is much more interesting. Do you think I'm such a child that I couldn't take it seriously? But wait a minute! Suppose I show you *my* diary? Will you then let me read yours?"

"Why, have you got one?"

"I don't mind admitting to you that I have."

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"But will you let me read it?"

"Of course I will, because I regard you as a friend. Only on one condition—that you also give me yours."

"May I think it over till to-morrow?"

"No, you may not! Such things aren't put off till to-morrow. I thought you were a man, but you're only a boy."

Although I felt very embarrassed, I wanted very much to read Sylva's diary. So I said:

"You must give me your word of honour that you'll never tell anyone about it. Do you understand? And, moreover, you mustn't discuss it with me either. Behave as though you hadn't read it."

"I give you my word," she said solemnly. "And, to show you I'm not curious, I'll be the first to bring you my diary to-morrow."

August 13th

As a lot of our fellows and girls had been to *Carmen*, they wanted to produce an opera at school. I suggested we do *Carmen* again, and undertook to be the toreador (a part I had already tried), while Kolka Paltusov could be given the part of Don José—he has a strong treble which might pass for a tenor voice. But Ludovica Carlovna said that neither *Carmen*, nor any other grand opera

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for that matter would do, and took out of her music-case a children's opera called *Panic among the Mushrooms*, and proposed that we produce it. Then she played it to us. I've seen a lot of bunk on the stage, but I never thought such utter tripe, with music to it, could ever have been composed for the theatre. For instance, it begins with an air sung by Queen Turnip :

A, B, C,
Monarch Pea,
How he wonders,
How he thunders,
It is quite,
Quite all right.

I'm damned if I know what that means, and I'm sure no one ever will know. So I listened for a while, and then started out on my own :

Yes, I see,
It is me ;
King, queen, ace,
To your place.

Ludovica Carlovna asked me what that meant, but I asked her to explain the meaning of the *Panic among the Mushrooms* and then I would tell her what I meant. The worst of it is that our protégés, the peasants,

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will probably be asked to the show, and I won't blame them if they tear the place down and murder all the singers. But Ludovica Carlovna said that the *Panic among the Mushrooms* was a very funny opera, and that if I didn't like it I could go away. I went, and only the very young ones from the first groups remained with her.

Sylva says she's forgotten the diary, but that she'll bring it to-morrow.

August 15th

I've just read Sylva's diary, but I believe she's hidden something from me. Her diary is certainly very interesting, but it is not complete. And, as it doesn't go by dates, there's no way of knowing where she's left anything out. Under the circumstances I shan't give her the whole of my diary, but only the first book for the first term.

(Here was found inserted in Riabtsov's diary a little note-book of lined paper bearing this title :

“ THIS BELONGS TO SYLPHIDA (EVDOKIA)
DUBININ, PUPIL OF GROUP IV OF THE
SECOND GRADE.”

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The note-book begins with Esenin's verses : " I don't regret, I do not call, I do not weep." These are followed by verses from Tyutchev, Balmont, Bunin, and Apukhtin's " Madman." After the verses comes the text :

I must and shall experience everything myself.

Life ! It's one thing in literature and quite another thing in reality. It is easier to live in imagination than in reality. But this must be fought against.

What is our life ? A novel.

Its author ? He's unknown.

We read it with an effort,

And laugh, and sleep, and moan.

Who would think that Karamzin could have written this in the eighteenth century ? And yet it was Karamzin. At first he wrote epigrams, and afterwards he wrote his *History of Russia*.

Z.P. says I have a literary style. I asked her what was the good of a literary style, and she said it denoted a cultured mind. A cultured person has a wider horizon.

My relations with Stasya V. are what they once were with Lina G.—I am a steampipe

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for her effusions. I neither like it nor dislike it. I just don't care. Stasya's sorrows don't seem very dreadful to me, and her tears aren't very bitter. Lina had better reasons for despairing than Stasya. But, all the same, all the same, when I look around me at the most critical moments, I feel that my own shirt is nearest my skin, and that real life as a whole is much more terrible than momentary misfortunes. It must be five years ago—ever since I began my conscious life—that I realised what a terrible thing life was. And I am sure that all boys and girls of my age must have understood this, or at least felt it. However, it doesn't matter. Besides, our generation has learned something new ; it has learned that, however terrible life may be, one must and can struggle with it and conquer it. And then it ceases to be so terrible and you begin to see its good points. These aren't my own ideas, of course, but it's already something that they've entered my mind and have taken root.

All this gives you strength to live and to fight with life. But I don't see much point in Lina's and Zoya's solution—what they did was silly in any case, and when they failed it was even sillier. And to look ridiculous is the worst thing in the world.

.

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When I am alone a strange feeling fills my soul ; it seems as though I were separated from the earth and were floating through airless space. I feel like that especially during the nights when the moon shines into my window.

.

Who needs me ? I sometimes feel as though no one did. And then I begin to look feverishly for a person who might want me. That's why I'm a steampipe.

Father is a compositor, and that's why I can read and write. Ever since my childhood our room has been full of books—one's life shapes one's mind.

.

I've read all I wrote and thought it over. With me everything depends on the mood I'm in. I can cry, but no one will ever know of it. Or I may get laughing fits, but I always try hard to stop them, for, if I didn't, I might lose all self-control.

Stasya was here yesterday and told me more about her romance. I don't think she should torment him any more. She will never go to an H.E.S., for she's almost illiterate, and she shouldn't trouble about finishing the fifth group. Why doesn't she get married and have done with it ?

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Another row between father and mother has just come to an end. Father came home drunk and began to swear at mother. Then they caught hold of each other, and mother shouted : " Dunka, come and help me ! " and father shouted : " Go away, Sylphida ; this is no place for you when the grown-ups are rejoicing." It was all very disgusting, and if father hadn't gone out I don't know what I would have done.

.

I've finished reading *War and Peace*. I wish I were like Natasha Rostov, but I feel I couldn't be. Although Natasha has an all-round interesting life, she is no more than a biological female, and according to *War and Peace* a woman's purpose is to be a female and no more. I believe Natasha had certain ideological desires, only Tolstoy, being a landowner and a count, did his best to conceal them. (He was a representative of feudalism.) Kostya R. reminds me of Nikolay Rostov, only he isn't so stupid. Zoya Travnikova is like the Princess Marie Bolkonsky, only better-looking. However, I don't really care for Zoya's type of beauty ; it's a strange type. And her hair is always untidy. Opinions about beauty may differ. I wonder what a certain person can see in Stasya V. ; she's got a turned-up nose and

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a tooth missing on the right side, and when she walks she waves her arms like a soldier. All the same, that certain person is all aflame !

I quite realise that what I've just written is a lot of petty-bourgeois talk, but I can't help it.

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If I worked in a factory instead of going to a second-grade school it might be easier for me. But I'm not sure, for I know of many cases at the factory to which our A.C.Y. section is attached. Here's one of them : A girl there aged sixteen got married to one of the fellows working at the same factory, and everyone made an awful fuss about it. Surely this shows a petty-bourgeois spirit also, for once the Government allows girls to marry at sixteen they should have left her in peace.

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Personally I wouldn't get married now. (I could if I wanted to, for I was sixteen in June.) I've looked at many married couples, and in most cases it's a pretty hard life ; and I've another example constantly before me—my own father and mother. Father used not to drink, but since his views and mother's began to differ he has taken to it.

On the other hand, I must experience

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everything for myself. I shan't rest till I've proved it all.

But I quite realise that full self-control must be achieved, and there are two powers struggling within me, and I don't know which of them will conquer the other. I call the power that pushes me towards various experiments, Dunka ; and the power that restrains me, Sylphida. Sylphida is more powerful, but Dunka is a nasty little minx, entirely lacking in ideological restraint.

.

Now about ideology. It certainly helps one in life, but one never quite knows what one's correct attitude ought to be. Take dancing, for instance. I thought that dancing wasn't allowed, but to-day I went to see Ivanov, the Unit secretary, about something, and asked him : " Tell me, is dancing allowed ? " He replied : " No one has ever forbidden it." " But, why, then, do people say that dancing is a bourgeois entertainment, and that it simply consists, as one of our second-graders said, of mutual sex excitement ? "

" Ah, well, you folks are trying to be too clever," said Ivanov. " We're not trying to turn anyone into a monk. Let everyone enjoy himself if he likes, so long as he doesn't do the others any harm."

So that's that. It's really very difficult to

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make head or tail of this ideology business. And yet one's whole attitude to life has got to depend on it.

It is easier to make things out in literature than in everyday life. You can re-read a literary work several times and think it over, but in ordinary everyday life you've got to make immediate decisions.

Such difficult dilemmas are most common at school, and you always have to decide on your attitude yourself ; there's no time to argue about it, and nobody to consult. It's especially difficult when there are riots or clashes with the school workers. And riots are very common at school these days. The last time the inspector was there he said it wasn't a school, but a company of cut-throats. Of course, that isn't true ; I admit there's plenty of rowdyism, but that's only natural in this revolutionary age.

.

Zin-Palna conducts a Pushkin seminar, and it is very interesting to work with her. She is making us analyse *Eugen Oneghin*. In such matters one should concentrate in the first place on ideology. Oneghin, of course, is permeated with a feudalistic-natural-economy, bourgeois-landowner ideology. (This is very long, but it is difficult to express it in any other way, because of the natural

economy.) There's no need to despise Pushkin for that, because in his days there was no dictatorship of the proletariat and no Soviet régime. Tsarism was in power then, and its representative, Nicholas I, oppressed Pushkin and banished him to Kishenev, and later to his family estate. Only here's something I don't understand : Pushkin was an Arab.¹ How, with all that hot Southern blood in his veins could he have written such a cold and passionless work as *Eugen Oneghin*? Zin-Palna says that in Pushkin's days young girls regarded Tatiana as an ideal. I fail to see how this could be possible in that corrupt feudalistic-bourgeois age. I don't believe that there really were women like Tatiana, and that Pushkin, being a romantic, simply invented her. I'm doubtful about Oneghin also, but it's very difficult for me to judge, for I shouldn't like to be Tatiana, and I know I shall never be like her. I believe a woman ought to yield to her passion, if it is genuine, and not try to suppress it.

In any case Tatiana isn't my ideal. There was no revolutionary passion in her. And life is impossible without it. But I rather like her, because she was able to control her actions, and that's a great thing. *I* only succeed on the surface, but inside a struggle

¹ Pushkin's maternal grandfather was a negro.

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goes on all the time. Of course, it was easier for Tatiana, for in her days there were no Octobrinas¹ and Sylphidas, and she only did what her natural landowner morality suggested to her. (So Nikolay Petrovitch says.)

Most of our girls want to be movie actresses or ballet dancers. Their education doesn't matter to them once they have handed in their tasks. It's only natural that most girls should be as illiterate as Stasya V. One girl from the fifth group said to me : " When I'm through with school I'll become a movie star and go to America ; that's my programme." The rest of the girls want to enter the factory after they are through, in order to grow *into* the working class.

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Zoya Travnikova pursues me wherever I go. What's she after ?

.

August 16th

I went to the Unit meeting at the factory, and they said that the social work at our school was poorly organised, and that it

¹ A Communist woman's name coined after the October Revolution.

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wasn't the skworkers' fault at all, as some people imagined, but the fault of the second-graders themselves. Serezhka Blinov remarked that we couldn't do anything, as everything was in the skworkers' hands, and that even the "self-government" was only *an invalid on skworkers' crutches*; but they told him that this was our own fault, and that we were too inactive, and that in any case there were many other forms of social work to which our attention could be directed. Serezhka said we had wall-sheets and circles, but they pointed out that the pioneer work was unorganised, and that all that our pioneers (all of whom belong to the junior groups) ever did was to march about the hall and play games. And that there were other social activities besides pioneer work. Serezhka meant to reply, but they said it was easy enough to justify one's inactivity by talking, and that what was really required was action.

In any case we got badly sat on, and we'll have to pull ourselves together.

August 17th

I told Sylva that her diary was incomplete, and she said nothing. That means it's true.

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I also said I would keep her diary for some time, so as to read it more carefully. Then I gave her the three note-books covering the first term. Before doing so I read them over to make quite sure that there was nothing in them she shouldn't read.

I'd like to know what she'll say about it.

August 18th

The Fluffy business is taking an unpleasant turn. Nikpetozh told me confidentially that several skworkers' meetings had been devoted to it, and that Zin-Palna had demanded a public trial of everyone concerned in the matter (that means most of the fellows). But Elnikitka had declared that, if it hadn't been for me, none of the others would have taken part in it, and that I alone should be tried. Fluffy walks about looking red and embarrassed ; she has been called several times before the skworkers' meetings, but Sylva says she's really very proud that so much fuss is being made about her.

I asked Nikpetozh what he thought would happen ; but he said there wouldn't be much, except perhaps a " public expression of censure." And he said that he would defend me, and advised me to find somebody

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among my comrades to stand by me. I thought it over, and, when I told Sylva I didn't know whom to choose, she asked me if I would mind having her as my advocate.

"But how are you going to defend me?" I asked.

"All in good time," she said. "At present I merely want your consent."

Of course, I agreed.

August 19th

I got hurt at football, but, although I'm limping badly, I continue going to school. Yushka Gromov did it; and against all the rules of the game at that. He's playing in the second team, and had no right to dash into me. Wait till my leg gets better! My new boots will just teach him how to run into people!

August 20th

There was a terrible rumpus at school to-day. I must enter it all in the order it happened, and then perhaps I'll be able to make it out better myself.

It was in the lecture-hall, during the Pushkin seminar. An essay on *Eugen Onegin*

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had to be written for Zin-Palna, and three days ago we handed it in. (Both the senior groups—the fourth and the fifth—take part in the seminar.) Just as we were all assembling to-day, Zin-Palna dashed into the room, and, sitting down, she spread our sheets and note-books on the table in front of her, with a mysterious air. We gazed at her in silence. This went on for about three minutes, and then I began to cough, and Volodka burst out giggling. Then Zin-Palna said :

“ If Alexander Sergeievitch Pushkin were alive, he would certainly die a second time were he compelled to read one tenth of the incredible piffle you’ve scribbled here. It took my breath away. To use your favourite expression, hell only knows what you’ve tried to do ! But no, I’m wrong ; it’s a good deal *beyond* hell.”

We had been quiet up till then, but here we burst out laughing. Zin-Palna continued :

“ I admit there are a few exceptions. There are one or two relatively successful essays, but, like all exceptions, they merely prove the general rule. Here’s an example of real piffle.”

She opened a copy-book and read aloud :

“ Pushkin was a Marxist and novelist. In this connection he wrote a whole novel

entitled *Eugen Oneghin*. In it he tried to emphasise the class war that was going on at that time. But Pushkin was a bourgeois, and that's why he wrote nothing about the proletariat in his novel, only about the bourgeoisie. . . . Then he got married, and wrote a fairy-tale for the first grade called *The Story of King Sultan and his Workman Balda*. Then he was killed in a duel, and buried, but *Eugen Oneghin* may still be read even now."

We were roaring like lunatics, but Zin-Palna looked at us with a stony face and said:

"*At whom are you laughing? You're laughing at yourselves.* For your information, this phrase comes from Gogol, whom, no doubt, you've read as carefully as you've read your Pushkin."

"Is everybody's like that, Zinaida Pavlovna?" Sylva asked from her seat.

"As I've already said, there *are* exceptions. But these don't change the general impression. Here's another bare summary of *Oneghin* which deserves to be read from beginning to end."

She picked up another sheet and read:

"Eugen was the son of an extravagant gentleman who departed to his little property and found his uncle lying on the table. He was interested in village life at first, but lost interest and got enchanted. Tatiana was

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a landowner. She read novels and beat her maids and wore a corset. She got enchanted with Oneghin and told her nurse to write him a letter. The nurse sent her grandson with the letter to Oneghin. Tatiana was greatly enchanted with her neighbour, and he had always been under her pillow,¹ and they used to visit the poor² and suffered from sadness. But the poet Lensky protected Tatiana. He and Oneghin were always differing,³ and they used to fight every day. One day Oneghin went bang at him with his revolvers and killed him dead. After that Tatiana married her friend the general and lived in great wealth, and enjoyed herself at festivals every day and was noticed in the court.⁴ Her husband was a cripple. Eugen saw Tatiana again and got enchanted with her and expressed his feelings, but she said she was married to a general and would be faithful to her husband. Here Eugen stops his story."

"Stasya Velipolsky wrote this," Yushka Gromov suddenly shouted from his seat. "I

¹ A "reference" to Tatiana's letter, in which she said she had heard Oneghin's voice in her dreams even before she saw him.

² They never did—a similar "reference."

³ A vague reminiscence of the "parallel" characterisation of the two friends in Pushkin's poem.

⁴ i.e. attracted attention at court.

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saw her writing on a sheet of paper like that."

Everyone stopped laughing, and Stasya Velipolsky jumped up and stamped her foot, and grew quite red, and meant to say something, only she suddenly burst out crying and dashed out of the lecture-hall. But that wasn't the end of the business.

"You see, Gromov," said Zin-Palna, after a moment's silence, "what your uncontrolled tongue does. Who asked you to shout in the lecture-hall? You won't increase Velipolsky's intelligence that way, and won't make her work any better. All you'll do is to make her stop coming to school."

But at this point Sylva gave me a surprise. She suddenly jumped up and said: "No, such things ought to be publicly discussed. Zinaida Pavlovna. If such things are to be passed over in silence, a second-grade school loses all purpose."

All the girls hissed at Sylva, but she continued: "The fact that the girls don't like what I say doesn't make any difference. It's only natural that they don't like it. Some of the girls are only interested in theatrical studios; why don't they go there? There are plenty of people outside the schools anxious to enter. Let us make room for them."

Here most of the girls got up and started

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shouting, but there was such a noise that you couldn't make out what they said. Some of them pounced on Sylva ; and I even threatened one of them with my fist from behind. The row was still going on when suddenly Zin-Palna's fist crashed down on the table, and she stamped both her feet.

"Stop this noise at once ! Remember you're at school." She grew red with excitement, and I noticed on that occasion that she just loves rows, although she always pretends to be angry.

When the noise had more or less calmed down, Zin-Palna proposed that a president should be appointed and a discussion opened as to whether Yushka Gromov had been right or wrong in naming Stasya Velipolsky. "But as this is a personal matter," said Zin-Palna, "I would suggest that you place the question on a wider basis, viz. whether such illiteracy as I have discovered in the essays on *Oneghin* is tolerable in the fifth group of a second-grade school."

Serezhka Blinov, who had been silent up till now, said from his seat : "We have come here to study and not to discuss things."

"You certainly surprise me, Blinov," said Zin-Palna. "You used to be such a violent advocate of an all-round discussion of every question, and now you oppose a debate.

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However, if the rest agree with you, I am willing to withdraw my proposal and to tell you once more about Pushkin and his works. Perhaps you will be good enough to remember that two months' time was devoted to Pushkin last session. The Velipolsky question will have to be put before the school board and the general meeting."

"I disagree," said Sylva. "We aren't obliged to share Blinov's views. I consider that the Velipolsky question ought to be discussed immediately and a resolution passed regarding the measures which the school ought to take."

Votes were taken, and it turned out that they were equally divided. Then Serezhka Blinov got up and said : "I'm going away. A step has been taken here which is very commonly used by the school workers. Just before the voting Zinaida Pavlovna threatened us with the school board and the general council. It is only natural that her statement should have influenced a certain number of votes, and, in spite of considerable opposition, the debate will now take place all the same. Such threats may be described as coercion and moral pressure, and I will not take part in a debate that's been created by coercion."

"I admit your reasoning is logical," said

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Zin-Palna, "but you must agree that incidents like Velipolsky's essay and Gromov's action cannot be passed over by the pupils and school workers. What would you have us do? I have proposed a measure that may have a certain influence on the future—a measure that seems reasonable and has been accepted by a part of this meeting; on the other hand, you tell us you've come to study and not to take part in debates. You call my reference to the board and the general meeting coercion. One would think that you wanted the whole matter hushed up, and were trying to shun a solution, for some reason known only to yourself."

"Oh, let him get out," I shouted from my place. "To listen to such arguments as his is simply a waste of time. Let's have our debate or get back to work, only let us stop this rubbish at all costs."

"Hear, hear!" the crowd shouted. "Give us one or the other."

Some of the girls went out with Blinov, but the majority remained, and it was decided to open the debate. I was elected president. Zinaida Pavlovna sat down at my desk and I took her seat. Yushka Gromov was the first to speak.

"I see no fault in my conduct," he said. "What's wrong with what I said of Stasya?"

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It'll just teach her not to write any more essays like that."

"Don't yell when no one asks you to," I said. "It's beside the point. Sit down, Gromov, till you are called upon."

Here Yushka tried to argue, and said I didn't know the duties of a president, and that I had no right to make remarks ; but they all shouted at him and he sat down. Then Sylva spoke :

"I know that my speech will annoy some of the girls, but it can't be helped. I'm thinking of their own good. In a few months the fifth group will go on to the Higher Education Schools, and enter into active life. What will they bring with them to the H.E.S.? The sort of thing that Zinaida Pavlovna has read to us to-day couldn't even be described as a lack of culture, but only as a savage form of ignorance. The worst of it is that Velipolsky did not even find it necessary to consult the school workers or some of her less ignorant schoolmates. She just had a bang at it—as the youngsters would say—and handed it in hoping it *might* do. My concrete proposal is this—let our fifth group pay some attention to itself before leaving school, and try to *liquidate* its illiteracy."

Then Volodka Schmerz got up, and before

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he spoke a word everyone knew he would come out with some idiotic stunt.

"Zinaida Pavlovna says," said Volodka, "that Pushkin would have died a second time if he had read our essays. Now, I believe it wouldn't have mattered at all, seeing he was of bourgeois descent, while we, as the song says, 'are the young guard of peasants and workers.'"

"Not to the point, Comrade Schmerz," said I. "Please try to keep to the subject and don't talk bunk. Otherwise I shan't allow you to speak."

"All right, I'll keep to the point. In my opinion, Gromov was quite right in naming the author of the *Oneghin* essay; the fact that the Velipolsky girl of Group V has had long and even *solitary* talks with the skworkers doesn't prove that she's very educated——"

"I deprive the speaker of his word," I said. "I knew Volodka wouldn't be happy until he could bring in some scandal."

Schmerz gave a nasty laugh and sat down. And then I added: "Look here, Schmerz, if you want to behave like a hooligan, I shall ask you to leave the meeting."

"You're getting very polite, Riabtsov, aren't you?" he said. "Trying to get on to the school board, I suppose?"

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I got really angry. "For insinuations against the president, I request you to leave the meeting at once."

"I'm not a *foolikin*, to leave the meeting for no reason at all."

"What do you mean by *foolikin*? Get out of here."

"All right, I'll go. But you'll find the word *foolikin* in Pushkin's letters. I advise you to read them, Riabtsov. *Liquidate* your own ignorance."

He then went out. I'm sure he had purposely put up the whole thing in order to show that I hadn't read Pushkin's letters. After that one of the senior girls began to speak against Sylva. She also said that the ignorance wasn't the pupils' fault, and that the skworkers themselves were to blame (with which I partly agree), and that they had been wrong all along in passing such ignorant pupils from one group to another. She spoke in a quiet way, and probably the debate would have ended quite peacefully, had not the following extraordinary thing happened. Nikpetozh marched quickly into the lecture-hall and looked around; seeing Zin-Palna sitting at a desk, he sat down beside her and began to talk to her in a rapid whisper. Zin-Palna shook her head and also answered him heatedly. Finally

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everybody grew intent, and gazed inquiringly at the two of them.

But suddenly Nikpetozh raised his voice and spoke in great excitement :

“ Do you regard it as a sound educative principle to make a fool of a grown-up girl in front of everybody, and to drive her to tears and hysterics ? ”

Zin-Palna said in a soft but quite audible voice :

“ Let us not discuss it here, Nikolay Petrovitch. Let's go and talk it over in the teachers' room.”

“ No, that's quite wrong,” said Nikpetozh, and was going to continue, only here I collected my courage and said :

“ Although I respect you very much, Nikolay Petrovitch, let me say that I gave you no permission to speak, and, if you want to have a private talk, you can have it outside in the passage. A debate is on in this room.”

“ Oh, excuse me. I didn't know this was a debate,” said Nikpetozh, and left the lecture-hall with Zin-Palna following. No sooner had they gone than everyone jumped up, and, however hard I banged the table with my fist, I was unable to restore order. The girls all crowded into a corner and whispered and Sylva came up to me and said : “ It

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seems we are rapidly approaching a petty-bourgeois spirit. What's the remedy?"

"Where do you see the petty-bourgeois spirit?"

"Why, look at this debate. And besides, I've caught myself on a bad thought. When the door opened I was sure it would be Nikpetozh."

"So was I."

"Well, that's what I mean by a petty-bourgeois spirit. Let's go."

From the skworkers' room we could hear the sounds of a noisy discussion, and Nikpetozh's voice rose loudest above the others. I learned from the youngsters that Stasya Velipolsky had had a fit of hysterics, after which she had gone home.

Our crowd grew strangely quiet all of a sudden. I felt that the best thing for me to do would be to go and play football. So I went off to the field.

August 24th

The rumour is spreading that a complete disagreement has set in among the skworkers, and that Nikpetozh intends to leave the school. All the skworkers seem to be siding

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with Zin-Palna, while Nikpetozh stands all alone. Many of the fellows are on Nikpetozh's side, and so are nearly all of the girls.

Things have got strangely mixed up. I don't know whose side to take. Sylva, on the other hand, is entirely in favour of Zin-Palna, as in her opinion Nikpetozh, regardless of his feelings towards Stasya, should have openly upheld justice and agreed that Stasya had no right to hand in such essays, and that in any case she had no business to be in the fifth group.

I quite agree with this, but, on the other hand, I'm very fond of Nikpetozh, and I always side with the minority on principle. And, although most of the pupils are on Nikpetozh's side, most of the skworkers are against him, and of course they'll have their own way.

All things considered, I'm in this dilemma: Sylva or Nikpetozh? Sylva says that if I support Nikpetozh I'll show a lack of principle. I can't decide this question at once; I must think it over. I shall not join any group until I find an answer.

August 26th

As the new school session is about to begin, Sylva and I went to see Ivano the secretary

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of the Unit, in order to find out when we would cease to be candidates and become regular members of the A.C.Y. Ivanov promised to put our question before the Unit, and said we had every chance of being accepted. What's more, he added that, if he wanted to, we might become *activists*, as he thought we were the right sort of people for it. I was very glad to hear it. Then Ivanov argued that the A.C.Y. badge wasn't the important thing, but that the right *spirit* had to be shown, and that it was necessary to raise the standard at our school. I said that Serezhka Blinov, the ex-secretary of our Unit, ought to look after that.

"Oh, no," said Ivanov, "I don't agree with you at all. Your Blinov is a pretty big driveller, and besides, if all the Communist Youths leave everything to the secretary, any secretary, however energetic, will go bust with overwork. It isn't rational to pile everything on the secretary while the rest do nothing. The State gives you a chance to join the ranks of the cultured, and it's your duty to show yourself worthy of this confidence and to show that you really *do* represent the vanguard. And for this purpose you've got to work as hard as you can, without caring so much about secretaries."

"I was going to ask you something,

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Comrade Ivanov," said Sylva. "You have just mentioned cultured people, and the fact that the State gives us the chance to join their ranks. Well, what I want to ask is this : Our most intelligent girls want to enter the factory after they've finished their studies. Perhaps it would be better if they went there right away, without waiting ? "

"Why do they want to do that ? " Ivanov asked. "What can they do at a factory ? "

"Why, work of course," said Sylva, "*so as to grow into the working class.*"

"Grow into wh-what ? " said Ivanov, greatly surprised.

"Grow into the working class. Become proletarians."

"But it is very difficult to work at a factory after having been to school. And besides, people at the factory begin at a very early age."

"Difficulties can be overcome."

"No doubt they can. And perhaps it wouldn't do your young ladies any harm if they turned their humps about for a bit," said Ivanov thoughtfully. "But here's the point : would it be *rational* ? I mean, would it be a rational utilisation of energy. After all, enormous sums of the people's money have been spilt on you. And it's been spilt so that you might be of use with your specialised

knowledge. And now are you suddenly going to throw all that luggage down half way and start training as factory workers? That means that a certain extra, additional amount of energy will have to be spent on you to turn you into factory hands. The State hasn't got this surplus energy. Besides, we've quite enough unemployed already, many of them skilled workers. Are we, instead of finding work for these people, to spend our time, money, and energy on re-educating you, and to throw to the dogs all that's been spent on you already? No, comrade, that won't do. We need doctors, teachers, engineers, and technicians of every kind. You'll have to forget about the factory for a while."

"Does that mean we'll have no access to the factory?" asked Sylva, in a fallen tone of voice.

"The access isn't closed," said Ivanov, "and if you've enough determination you can get in, of course. If not here, then somewhere else. Only you've got to ask yourself point-blank: 'Is it rational?' You are conscientious people and not brainless clodhoppers. And if you are conscious of the difficulties of the Soviet State, you must do your best to *liquidate* them instead of increasing them."

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Then I asked Ivanov how he thought our standard of work at school could be raised, and what we should do about it.

"There isn't any work at your school," said Ivanov, which offended me very much. "At any rate, I can see no results. To get results you've got to stop talking and to start real work."

Then I asked what Sylva and I, for instance, could do.

"Are your pioneers organised?" said Ivanov.

"It all depends on what you mean by 'organised.' They make solemn vows, and march about, and wear ties, and take part in processions, and——"

"That's just it. They wear ties! In all the schools nowadays pioneer outposts are formed of the fellows who aren't overburdened with their regimental work. These outposts must draw the school into the social and political life of the country, organise the self-government, help the teachers in every way, including the actual teaching, and contribute to the political, physical, and anti-religious training of the young. There are many other things I haven't mentioned that they could do. Why don't you try and organise such an outpost at your place?"

After that we went away.

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August 27th

To-day I was tried in connection with the Fluffy incident.

It was all very solemn. Serezhka Blinov was elected judge. He tried to get out of it at first, but in the end he sourly agreed. There were two counsels for the prosecution—Almakfish and Ninka Fradkin; and two advocates—Nikpetozh and Sylva.

I was made to sit on a special bench, and so was Fluffy. The jury was composed of six fellows and six girls. When I saw that Volodka Schmerz and Yushka Gromov and some of their friends were among them, I felt I was done for.

Serezhka opened the trial and said: "We are hearing the case of Kostya Riabtsov, accused by the plaintiff, Lena Orlova, of having organised an intolerable disorder in the school. Kostya Riabtsov, do you plead guilty?"

"Guilty of what? I admit we had a kick-up, but I see no crime in it. Everyone squeezed her."

"Who is 'everyone'?"

"All the fellows."

"And you were the guide and initiator?"

"I was nothing of the sort."

"Then who was the initiator?"

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"Nobody. We just squeezed and squeezed her. It's a kind of game."

"But there are chiefs in games. For instance, the captain in a football team."

"Football is an organised game; the other thing was an unorganised game."

"All right. That'll do. Lena Orlova, do you complain of having been injured?"

Fluffy said nothing.

"Well, Orlova?" said Serezhka, in an official tone of voice. "We're all waiting."

"He squeezed," Fluffy squeaked almost inaudibly.

The crowd gave a roar of laughter. Serezhka rang the bell.

"Let the public behave, or I'll have the court cleared. Well, Orlova, do you complain of having been injured?"

"Rot!" Kolka Paltusov shouted from amongst the public, "she simply admits having been squeezed."

"Another word from you, Paltusov, and you'll leave the meeting. Well, Orlova, was it nice being squeezed?"

"It wasn't nice," Fluffy squeaked.

"Why, then, didn't you appeal to the skw—school worker on duty?"

"I was frightened."

"What were you frightened of?"

"Well, you know," Fluffy squeaked, "they might have beat me."

Again everybody laughed. Then Serezhka asked :

"That's nonsense, Orlova. Have you ever seen any boy beating a girl at our school ? "

"Very often."

"Allow me to ask a question," Zin-Palna joined in from the public. "Tell me, Orlova, why these fights are not brought to the notice of the school workers and why no one ever knows about them."

"Why, it's a game," said Fluffy, "and sometimes the girls beat the boys."

"That'll do, Orlova," said Serezhka Blinov.

"Now the witnesses. The court calls upon the witness, the Citizen Kaurova, who was the skw—school worker on duty on that particular day. Elene Nikitichna, what can you say on this matter ? "

"I can say this," said Elnikitka, "that Riabtsov, being an immoral boy, was undoubtedly at the head of the gang that attacked Orlova. What Orlova calls a game wasn't a game at all, but a thorough disgrace. It is intolerable at school. If Riabtsov hadn't been there one might believe it was no more than an innocent childish row ; but

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there appears to exist some other information about Riabtsov."

"We shan't talk of any other information," said Serezhka. "Who else wishes to bear witness?"

"I do," said Kolka Paltusov.

"What've you got to say? Hurry up."

Here Sylva suddenly got up.

"I protest against trying to speed up a witness."

"Ah, well," said Serezhka, "no good drawing things out too much. Speak, Paltusov."

"Well," said Kolka, "the point is that I also took part in it, and I don't see why Riabtsov alone is being tried. It was just an ordinary kick-up, and if it calls for a trial we ought to have several trials a day. Let the skworkers remember if they themselves had any kick-ups when they were at the secondary school themselves."

"Say school workers, Paltusov," Serezhka corrected him.

"All right, school workers, then—it doesn't matter. Even in literature you read about the rows they used to have. Only in those days they enjoyed great power, and could beat and thrash the kids to their hearts' content, but here they can't do it, so that's why they've invented this trial."

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"No one has invented this trial," Serezhka interrupted sternly. "A trial is an organised form of Soviet society. But that'll do. I call upon Alexey Maximitch, for the prosecution——"

But Almakfish got up and unexpectedly declared :

"I refuse to speak, because the matter is quite clear enough."

Then Ninka Fradkin, the second counsel, got up.

"I demand," she said, "that Kostya Riabtsov be punished as severely as possible—for instance, let him be expelled. He can't control his hands, and never passes a girl without banging her on the back."

"Yes, and she herself pulled my hair last week."

"The speech of the accused will come later ; he must be silent now," said Serezhka.

"I did it once, and how many times have you done it?" asked Ninka. "And I'm sure it was he who always arranged the squeezing stunts with Lena Orlova. They all say they like the way she squeaks. Supposing they were to like the way I howled or slapped their faces with my slipper, would they squeeze me also? It would be disgraceful if they started squeezing all the girls. That's why I demand that

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Riabtsov be severely punished, and, if not expelled, that he be given at least a hundred maths problems to solve in one week."

"Study is no punishment," said Serezhka. "Now let the advocates speak. Go on, Dubinin."

"Very well," said Sylva, and leapt from her seat. I looked at her, and hardly recognised her; her eyes were burning, her hair had become curly and stood up all round her head.

"If Riabtsov is to be expelled," she said, "all the other boys must be expelled too. Let the girls alone remain. Fradkin, who accused Riabtsov, and all the rest of them, understand perfectly well that Riabtsov isn't alone to blame, but that they all are. There's a constant carry-on in the hall and the passages, and no one could possibly say who beats whom, or who makes the biggest noise. But if we did that it would be contrary to the ideology. The Soviet power, by introducing mixed teaching, has emancipated women and established sex equality. Perhaps Riabtsov has used his hands more frequently than some of the others, but that would be no reason for breaking up the new order the Revolution has established, and for separating the boys from the girls.

"Tell me, why does no one ever trouble *me* with pretty speeches and pats on the back? Because I don't want it, and should never allow it. It should be the same with the others. Instead of condemning Riabtsov, I propose that the court condemn the girls who like such carry-ons, and expel some of them——"

"I call on Nikolay Petrovitch," said Serezhka.

"I feel there isn't much to say after Dubinin's speech," said Nikpetozh. "I may, however, add this. In every man there goes on a constant struggle between two elements—the good and the bad. People used to personify these two elements, calling them God and the devil, light and darkness, etc. We find it in literature also. For instance, there is a play by Shakespeare called *King Henry*. In it the Prince Henry is on the friendliest terms with a drunkard and libertine called Falstaff; they both go out and rob the passers-by; they get drunk together and what not. But later Henry is made king, and Falstaff hurries to his old friend, hoping to get a reward, and looking forward to even wilder drinking bouts. But this is where Falstaff makes a mistake. Henry hardly remembers him, and, when he does, it is like a painful nightmare to him. You've got to

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understand it this way. In every man there is a Henry and a Falstaff. 'Sometimes, especially in youth, Falstaff gets the better of a man, but it's sufficient that the man should realise his responsibility towards others for Henry to come to the fore, and the Falstaff element then turns into a painful nightmare. You wish to condemn Riabtsov's actions; I agree with Dubinin that there is nothing in them. They're no more than ordinary schoolboy rowdyism. But let us admit for a moment that it's the Falstaff in Riabtsov. This will vanish like smoke. Yet by condemning Riabtsov we shall only encourage the Falstaff in him. At the same time there is more Henry than Falstaff in Riabtsov—that is, more good than evil."

Here Almakfish suddenly jumped out of his seat.

"Allow me a word," he shouted. "As counsel for the prosecution I have a right to contradict the advocate. Nikolay Petrovitch has just spoken of good and evil, and has said that there was more good than evil in Riabtsov. I say and maintain that, *quantitatively*, Riabtsov's action *stands beyond good and evil*, and that, *qualitatively*, it expresses the abundance of the epoch. I have spoken."

No one understood what he had meant to say. (As for Nikpetozh, he does like

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Shakespeare and *will* shove him in whenever he can.)

"Let the accused speak now," said Serezhka Blinov.

"I shan't excuse myself," I said. "I am not to blame, and everyone knows it. By excusing myself I would be excusing this comic opera. But this is what I wish to say. Nikolay Petrovitch, and, later, Alexey Maximitch, have talked about good and evil. The *Politgrammar* shows that there is no such thing as good or evil, and that everything depends on economic relations. 'Good or evil' is idealism. For instance, I don't think there is any good or evil in me. When I've had plenty to eat I'm good, and when I'm hungry I'm bad, and if anyone bothers me then, I'm more likely to punch him in the face. That's all."

The jury retired, and stayed away for five minutes. When they returned my heart suddenly dropped. What if I was to be expelled? But Volodka Schmerz read out: . . . "to admonish Riabtsov and stop the squeezing; and, further, to instruct Orlova and the other girls not to tolerate any more pawing and squeezing."

It came out Sylva's way.

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August 28th

A new wall-sheet, entitled *For Nikpetozh*, has come out ; it has no number and no signatures.

As I still hadn't decided which party to join, I had no part in the paper, and had even no idea who had issued it. Sylva knew nothing about it, either. There's a little article in the paper called :

MEDICINE : THE BATTLE AGAINST TONGUE ITCH

" Professor Ivan Ivanovitch Bloodyfool has discovered a cure for tongue-itch, a disease which has recently taken on the proportions of a dangerous epidemic. This eminent member of the medical profession, who, incidentally, has been awarded the Nobel Prize in the form of two salted cucumbers, devoted the lesser part of his life to the struggle with the above-named disease. Ivan Ivanovitch Bloodyfool has discovered the tongue-itch bacillus, which is acquired through the bite of the silli-rumor flea in cases of strongly developed idleitis. The eminent doctor has, in the interests of science, inoculated himself with the above-named bacillus, after

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which he began to talk at the rate of 1,000 words per minute, of which 120 per cent. were composed of the most outrageous slanderous drivel. Thanks, however, to the doctor's heroic perseverance, he also discovered a cure for the above disease. This preparation, being an extract from Kautsky and other authors on Marxian ethics, is described by its inventor as *antiscandaline*.

"It is to be taken between and after work, and also before going to bed.

"Comrade Bloodyfool has also specified the particular discipline required during the treatment of the terrible disease.

"In order to obtain favourable results (reduction of the bacillus's activity to not more than twenty-five scandelettes a minute) the patient is required to discuss uninterruptedly the following subjects :

"(1) A comparison between the fire on Moscow in 1813 and the neglect of the skworkers' rules at our school.

"(2) The points of similarity and difference between a motor-boat, a morning coat, a nail, and a funeral Mass.

"(3) The problem of lighting cigarettes against shining bald heads (to be demonstrated mathematically).

"In an interview with our reporter,

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Citizen Bloodyfool explained that he had first noticed the world importance of the disease when Curzon's note had overlapped the size of the *Sunday Times*. Only after the epidemic had spread as far as the U.S.S.R. had the professor come to Russia for special investigation, and here he discovered our school. One of these days the professor will begin the treatment of patients suffering from tongue-itch at our school.

"Several tons of turpentine have been prepared for rubbing the tongues of the patients."

That's all very nice, and I quite agree with it, only my inner struggle is getting intenser every day. Shall I be for or against Nikpetozh? There's a rumour that Nikpetozh has finally and irretrievably decided to go. School will be very empty without him.

I described my doubts to Sylva, and she said she also found it very painful, but that one had to stick to one's principles. And Sylva added that it was a well-known fact that individual personalities played no part whatsoever in history. Of course, that's quite true.

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August 29th

I finally made up my mind and went to see Nikpetozh himself. "Nikolay Petrovitch" I said, "when there's a conflict between a personal and a social element, to which of the two must one's preference go?"

"To the social element," said Nikpetozh.

"I see. In that case I can't be in the party that's in your favour. Although it's very hard for me, I must side with your opponents."

"We don't need any parties at all," he said, and I felt he spoke with an effort. "I realise I'm—in the wrong. I am leaving the school. For a time I placed the personal above the social."

I nearly wept. Our talk stopped there.

August 30th

Sylva and I are now members of the A.C.Y. We were unanimously confirmed, and have been entrusted with the organisation of an outpost of pioneers. That'll be our first Party task.

To-day it became definitely known that Nikolay Petrovitch Ozhegov is leaving the school. I'll be going to see him at his house.

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September 1st

I've entered the school board as a representative of the outpost. The pioneers threw me up in the air. I don't know why, but all the younger fellows seem to like me.

Long live our Outpost !

THE END



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